
JAMES SPEED

A Personality

By JAMES SPEED, His Grandson



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JAMES SPEED

1833

FROM AN OIL PAINTING, ARTIST UNKNOWN

JAMES SPEED

A Personality



BY
JAMES SPEED
His Grandson



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PREFACE.

MEN come and go and a few names are left on the pages of the histories of our most strenuous periods. About these great names a group of lesser names usually cluster. Gradually through the years that pass the reading public connects a certain well-known name with some particular period. The man's face probably looks out at the reader from the printed page and a few of the highest points in his public career are recorded, but the reading public and the world at large know absolutely nothing of him as a man in his everyday life.

The subject of this little memoir was one of those lesser names which clustered about the name of Lincoln during the strenuous times when the North and South were divided. The main thought in this volume is to go behind public events and to see something of the man

as he appeared to his own immediate family and to his most intimate friends; to know him as he revealed himself in his letters to his mother, to his wife, and to his close relatives, and in the large hospitality of his own home.

The thought of preserving in a small volume what is known of a personality that had grown and developed before and during the days of stress of the Civil War became a strong desire on the part of James Speed's nephew, James Breckinridge Speed. Gradually this desire grew until he felt he must arrange for its fulfillment. Frail in health, James Breckinridge Speed passed away without the gratification of seeing his affectionate tribute in permanent form.

A year and a half later this work was entrusted to the author by Hattie Bishop Speed, his widow, and reverently finished as one of his most cherished wishes.

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CHAPTER I.

1812—1832

"FARMINGTON" in the spring of 1812 showed eighty broad acres of tender sage green hemp; acres of crab bloom that was heavy with the drowsy hum of the plundering honey bees climbed the swelling upland; many other acres, as far as the eye could reach, were a mellow dull brown, dotted here and there with the new corn that was pushing up into the sunlight. Ample old-fashioned barns and out-buildings crowded close about a substantial country house, while in the hollow below a moss-covered rock spring house was the fountain head of a small, clear stream, whose steep banks and surface were green with young aromatic mint and tender pungent cress. Above the house, the fields, the orchard, and the murmuring stream curved the sky, washed tender blue by the soft spring rain.

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“Farmington” lay in the broad green lap of Jefferson County, Kentucky. Kentucky in 1812 was exquisitely beautiful in a newness that had only lately been tempered by the farmer’s kindly touch. It was a country that darkened occasionally with the flight of countless millions of wild pigeons; it was a country that was beginning to check the careless hurry of its streams that they might grind the farmer’s corn in rude mills built of rough-hewn limestone; it was a country that was often hazy with the blue smoke of huge piles of logs which were burned to clear the land for cultivation; it was a country where countless centuries had hoarded their surplus fertility so that hemp and corn were grown on the same fields year after year. In fact, the best farmers believed the land to be inexhaustible in its plentiful store of plant food. They were so accustomed to a soil to which Nature had given her best gifts of splendid timber and virgin fertility, that prodigal hospi-

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tality was almost a part of the landowner's religion.

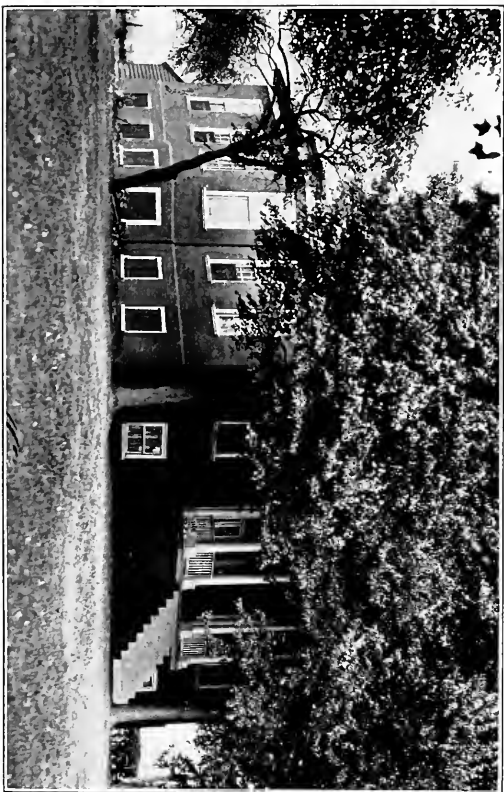
War clouds hung low in 1812, and soldiers were being hurried across the river to repulse the English and their Indian allies along the northern border of the United States. Many of the soldiers from Kentucky and other States, unequipped, without blankets or even sufficient provisions, camped on Beargrass Creek near "Farmington." These men were in sore need of the prodigal hospitality for which the rich landowners of Kentucky had become noted. The owner of "Farmington's" broad acres, John Speed, gave the blankets from his beds to the soldiers, buying heavy buffalo robes for home use; and he also emptied his smokehouse and corncribs, which had been filled by the labor of his slaves, that the men might be fed.

At this early date John Speed saw two clouds hovering over the household at "Farmington" and over the whole State of Kentucky.

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One of these clouds, which was dark and impending, the war with England, was recognized by every one; the other, even more dark and more threatening, human slavery, was seen by few, for it lay so low upon the distant horizon that its nearest edge could merely be seen. It is rather strange that John Speed recognized this second cloud when it was so far away, because he owned and used the labor of seventy slaves upon the fields at "Farmington." However, he never at any time seemed to feel that his slaves were anything more than a trust which he must hold and use as humanely and as fairly as possible. He felt that eventually the owners of slaves in Kentucky would awaken to the full meaning and the debasing effects of the system and free the negro.

It was into such an environment of lavish nature, prodigal wastefulness, ample hospitality, human slavery, and a closely woven home life, that James Speed was born March 11, 1812,



"FARMINGTON"

Photo by Author

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one of a family of six brothers and five sisters. As he grew into boyhood there were trips on horseback to the old Peay mill, which still stands in ruins, covered with vines, near Big Rock in Cherokee Park. There were hunting expeditions into the Knobs or to "pigeon roosts," that the table might be supplied with game. There were other wonderful horseback journeys down to the salt licks on Salt River near Shepherdsville, where his father, John Speed, manufactured salt for the surrounding country. It was while waiting for his corn to be ground at the mill on Beargrass and on his trips to the salt licks that he learned to love the gentle art of angling, for at that time every small stream teemed with black bass or bream which could be caught in the swirl below any dam or other obstruction. It was while living an outdoor, active life that he became a true lover of the lights and shadows under the trees, the pulsing lights at dusk and dawn, the odor

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of roses wet with dew, and the soft harmonies of wind and stream.

Added to the splendid physical environment in which James Speed was born was an ancestry which meant a great deal both in mental and moral fibre. His family, both on his mother's and father's side, were from old English stock, that had emigrated to America and settled in Virginia in the early colonial days. This splendid stock, transplanted into pioneer life in a new country, grew vigorously. From Virginia both his father and mother came with their parents over the old Wilderness Road into the newer land of promise—Kentucky.

A large part of the boy's education undoubtedly came through contact with farm life in the good old days, the companionship of a father who was educated in the best sense of the word, and a strong mother, who was Lucy Gilmer Fry, a member of an old family which was devoted to educational work. Of course, he

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went to the little country school, taught by Mr. Smith, who evidently believed thoroughly in the birch rod, because years later James Speed told an interesting story of having had words with the old gentleman concerning slavery, and at once the schoolmaster reached up as though to lay hands on the familiar birch rod, which was always on the wall within easy reach. Later, after James Speed had finished his work in the little schoolhouse, he entered St. Joseph's College at Bardstown, and graduated from that institution at seventeen years of age. Some time was spent as a clerk in a lawyer's office, and he went to Lexington to prepare for the practice of law.

It is rather interesting to note that during these two years of transition from boyhood into manhood he took himself very seriously, as do many youths. Several letters to his father show that the weight of the universe was on his youthful shoulders and he was sermonizing at great length.

James Speed

Lexington, February 9, 1831.

Dear Father:

Man, *with you*, is the creature of chance, or rather moulded as circumstances may happen, and with me, in all circumstances he is the creature of habit. Of this there can be no doubt. And his habits when formed, if virtuous and correct, can be easily and without much effort continued, and if vicious and incorrect he will need almost super-human resolution to get rid of them; therefore, I conclude that a man's future welfare and success depends upon his forming laudable and meritorious habits, and the term *habit* may be considered as embracing the regular mode of exercising all the faculties of his mind as well as the strength or powers of his corporeal system. It is unnecessary to illustrate by example that it is much easier when you commence anything to obtain sufficient information to carry you through without much blundering than it is to commence at hazard and depend upon time and chance to let you know that you are in the correct track, for they are many and obvious. All then depends upon the formation of one's habits. But here the question naturally suggests itself, what habits are to be formed and what are not? This query, when put by me, it would seem that the answer was a clear and obvious one, viz., my habits must be studious and moral. But I set out in this letter by saying that man was

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the creature of circumstances and in those circumstances the creature of habit. Habit is then secondary to circumstances and must be in some measure controlled by them. Understand me when I say that habit is subservient to circumstances not as including habits of morality, for I consider that they always are or ought to be settled before any one arrives at my age.

Lexington, April 9, 1831.

Dear Father:

The clothes that I brought with me are all good except my cravats and old blacks and with Burns, I say, "God bless 'um," they have served me well," but are now getting pretty well upon the wane. This morning I called at a slop-shop. A summer coat costs ten dollars, summer pantaloons two and a half, waistcoats from two to four. I really forget what they said their price for cravats were, though Mother can rate them in proportion. The coat is made of black bumbizeene, the pantaloons yellow nankeen and white drilling, waistcoats all kinds and colors. It is a new business with me, and whether cheap or not I will take Mother's say so for it.

.

Much better pleased in every respect than I anticipated, and especially with the ladies of Lex-

James Speed

ington. Tell my sisters of this and tell them that all they hear there of their stiffness, etc., etc., is altogether a bugbear.

Lexington, May 27, 1832.

Dear Father:

Mother's fears about my health were all idle. I am now entirely well, both as to eyes and body. I was sure that I could come up without any risk.

I attend daily a class that is reading Chitty's *Work on Pleading*, a book that I read last winter, and am examined with Richmond and Massie twice a week in Adams on the *Action of Ejectment*.

The relaxation I took whilst at home has unhinged my mind a good deal; I think, however, that when I can fix my attention it is more vigorous than it was, and I think that I can comprehend difficult points with less labor than I could before I left here. My quickened facility of comprehension may make up for my incapability of the very close attention I could command before. The faculty of attention is entirely dependent upon habit, and will be easily acquired again.

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CHAPTER II.

1832-1844

IN this small book the only effort made has been to secure enough material of an intimate nature that the man himself may tell the story of his own growth and development. It will, of course, be absolutely necessary from time to time to introduce a story that has been told and retold in the family, or a scrap of history that is fairly well known, that the reader may be able to piece these fragments together into a complete picture of a delightful personality that was loved by young and old, black and white.

Few men appear to grow steadily. It seems that men grow unconsciously, and also grow during certain periods of their history.

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Frequently there are long intervals between periods of activity; and even at times there may be spaces in life when the person who is really capable of big and strong things loses faith in himself and every one else. That James Speed was no exception to this rule can be easily seen from a little diary which he started in the year '44. This diary was found in an old yellow account book among a stack of old briefs, papers, and receipts. It was begun about three years after his marriage to Jane Leiper Cochran, and gives intimate glimpses of his business life, of his thoughts and observations, of events as they happened in his work-a-day world.

In this diary, too, there are frequent observations of weather conditions, fruits, and crops, which give a bit of insight into his love of the out-of-doors. This wonderful love of Nature in all of her moods had a marked effect upon his whole makeup, for even when most despondent or over-sensitive, the out-of-doors seemed to be



OLD SPRING HOUSE
"FARMINGTON"

Photo by Author

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the needed healing balm. During the six weeks that this diary was kept almost daily notes were made, but the following brief extracts are enough to tell something of his development at this peculiar period in his life.

Louisville, March 11, 1844.

I am this day thirty-two years old. Divers years past I commenced the keeping of a diary. It was begun as a wholesome exercise of the mind and that it might be a convenient reference in after life. Like most good resolutions, it was easily made and even more easily broken. The book was kept with great regularity for a short time, then irregularly for a long time, and ultimately abandoned altogether, and then lost or destroyed.

With me this day has been like unto all others, full of trouble and vexation. Not with the persons and things of this world have I been troubled and vexed, but with myself. I am harassed out of my life with the phantoms of my own imagination, a morbid sensibility is killing me inch by inch. I must correct it. But how am I to do so? Close application to business and great assiduity seems to make it worse, and relaxation disqualifies me for business. Let time and chance determine.

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Louisville, March 14, 1844.

This has been a rainy and most disagreeable day. What with the weather and with my indisposition, the day has been to me most disagreeable.

I have been all day reading the papers in the case of C. M. Strader & Company vs. the Fulton & Company, and it is a tiresome business. I would not mind it if I were well, but sick as I am it is awful. A circumstance, and a very little one it was, contributed to annoy me whilst engaged at my work. I read the papers in the Master's office; whilst I was at it and throughout the whole day the Master in Chancery was taking depositions—the case of the Steamboat *Star of the West* against the Steamboat *Harkaway*. The noise and bustle and crowd of witnesses did not annoy me. I was annoyed by the Master's pronunciation of *Star*. He uniformly called it Stair—the Stair of the West was come over by him at least five hundred times.

Louisville, Ky., March 20, 1844.

An equinoctial day, unsteady weather. I have had to-day unusually low spirits, and don't know how to account for it. I have lately fallen into a habit of thinking too much of myself and my prospects, and not with as high hopes as I ought. The man who has not high hopes and great confidence in the success of everything he undertakes

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ought not to permit himself to think a great deal of the future. He ought to keep himself busily occupied about things which are transpiring and with the past. Different as are the forms and appearances of men, their exteriors are not more different than their minds. Some men are ever on the high road to an Eldorado and they are never disappointed, for they never stop or look back. Other men are ever on the road to the Black Hole of Calcutta. There is no comparison between these men. The man of ever bright and cheering prospects is always happy. The man of cloudy prospect, though he may not be melancholy, is not happy. Can either of these characters be acquired? Will religion change a man so much to make him look forward with hope and with pleasure?

Louisville, March 26, 1844.

I am really ashamed of myself. Another apology is necessary. It was neglect, not forgetfulness. I thought of my resolution and knew my duty but neglected it. How many secret resolutions of this kind do we disregard? Hence the necessity for a profession of religion; hence the argument in favor of the confessional. The reproving eye of society keeps very many in order and makes them keep in the right path, when if left to themselves they would go astray. Hence, too, secret vices are much more

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common than open ones. All men are more or less influenced by the society in which they live. Virtues and vices are now fashionable and now unfashionable. Bacon says truly that there are *vitia temporis* and *vitia hominis*. The *vitia temporis* are generally open and undisguised, to be seen and known of all men; the *vitia hominis* are generally private and kept as much in the dark as possible.

Louisville, March 31, 1844.

The ground was right much frozen this morning. The peach trees being in full bloom it has been generally predicted that we will have few or no peaches this year. I examined the buds or blossoms in my yard and could not see that they were injured. I suppose, however, that the trees in my yard are much more protected than in the orchards in the country. The day has been clear and pleasant.

Louisville, April 3, 1844.

Another lovely day. Nothing new happened, and I believe that I heard but little worth recollecting. The forenoon spent in the circuit court; in the afternoon took a ride with Wm. H. Field, Esq., on the Bardstown Road. The peach trees in the country in full bloom, the forest trees generally budding. I did not find the grass in the country as fine as I expected from the appearance of the little patches in town.

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Louisville, April 7, 1844.

Yesterday, the sixth, was a lovely day. I was fishing all day. Came home just at night and neglected to note anything herein because I was tired.

Louisville, April 10, 1844.

For some time past there has been a great deal of talk about the annexation of Texas. I have read all that I could find on the subject and have listened to all that I could hear. My mind is fully made up against the annexation of the whole of Texas as a slave State or as a country out of which divers slave States might be carved. It would produce the effect of fastening slavery on Kentucky. It would open so profitable a market for slaves that Kentucky, instead of remaining what she is now—an agricultural State—would become a slave-growing State. Slaves would not merely be of value as workers or laborers, but would have value as a marketable commodity. Slavery is the curse of the State. I would willingly adopt any feasible plan to be rid of it.

April 11, 1844.

A lovely day and I am very much fatigued, having spent the day fishing.

Louisville, April 14, 1844.

The weather has been very hot for a day or two past. On Friday the dogwood was partially in

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bloom, to-day in full bloom. I hear it generally said that the spring is uncommonly early. For myself I can not recollect from year to year, and I am doubtful of the memory of others about the matter.

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CHAPTER III.

1844—1849

IN 1847 James Speed went to Frankfort to represent the city of Louisville in the Lower House, and during his stay in the capital of the State he wrote to his mother each Sunday. This custom of writing his mother a letter each Sunday grew quite naturally out of a habit which had become fixed with him and his brothers who lived in Louisville. Each Sunday morning the year around, before going to church, they would meet for an hour or two with their mother at her home on the southwest corner of Eighth and Walnut streets, to have a cozy family chat. This peculiar and beautiful habit even descended to her grandsons and one or two of her great grandsons, who came regularly to pay their respects the beginning of each week. Of

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these letters written at that time only a few are left of the year 1848, and extracts are here given from three of them.

Frankfort, January 9, 1848.

Dear Mother:

Those who are of the impression that the office of Representative from Louisville is a sinecure are mistaken. It is an arduous trust, if faithfully discharged. You would marvel to see the budget of matter before me. Most of it very frivolous, and a great deal very foolish, which would seem to render the labor light. True, it makes it light, but adds to the vexation—the more frivolous or foolish a thing may be, the greater is the difficulty in bearing yourself towards the applicant so as not to give offense. Good tempered as I am, it has been hard for me to treat with becoming respect some foolish applications that I knew to be made in serious earnest, and with sanguine hopes of success. The duties imposed on me are arduous. I am on two of the committees to which are referred the most important and laborious duties.

. . . . I have no time upon my hands, less leisure than when at home. My time is so occupied that I have but little opportunity of making the acquaintance of my brother members, beyond such as I come in contact with in the way

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of business. As I have no time for it, I am not likely to engage in any of the many dissipations in vogue here.

Frankfort, January 30, 1848.

Dear Mother:

You have transmitted to me one point of character, that I find now exceedingly disagreeable. It is a fondness for home and familiar faces. The excitement of business carries me through the days of the week tolerably well, but when night comes, and especially the Sunday, my thoughts turn to other scenes and bring up other faces than those within my view. Whether lawyer or legislator, I am still a man, and love as a man to cherish and cultivate the affections which are native, and have grown and strengthened with passing time.

I am really tired of this place and the life I lead. The sooner we adjourn and go home the better for me and for the country. Upon the whole, however, I do not regret having come here. I have read with interest, and not without profit, another and important chapter on the human character. Like all things in this world, the chapter is mixed with good and ill.

Frankfort, February 20, 1848.

Dear Mother:

. . . . For three days past we have had clouds, heavy rain, and thunder—to-day has been

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a beautiful one. The man who would not, on such a day, gratefully thank the Giver of all things for past favors, and earnestly ask a continuance of them, is past my comprehension.

In the extracts from James Speed's diary given in the preceding chapter, a clear and definite conception of his attitude toward slavery in Kentucky when it was proposed to annex the State of Texas either as a slave State or a group of slave States, can be had. In the year '49 when the repeal of the slave law of '33 was under consideration at Frankfort, James Speed wrote a series of articles for the *Louisville Courier*. That some clippings from these old papers may be more easily understood, a couple of incidents of the farm life at "Farmington" in the thirties must be given, for every man writes from the experience of his whole life.

John Speed had always believed firmly that the negro would be emancipated in his native State. Having this feeling he naturally gave his negroes every opportunity to develop as

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fully as possible under the restrictions which their servitude necessarily imposed.

John Speed's position in regard to slavery is brought out clearly and forcibly by the Reverend James Freeman Clark, the eminent Unitarian minister of Boston, Massachusetts, in his autobiography. During the time that Mr. Clark was pastor of the Unitarian Church in Louisville, Kentucky, he was a frequent visitor at "Farmington," which was only five miles from the town, and he became very fond of the old gentleman. The following is taken from Mr. Clark's book:

Judge Speed was a slaveholder, but he did not believe in slavery. He thought it wrong in itself and injurious to the State, and expected, like most intelligent Kentuckians at that time, that Kentucky would before long emancipate its slaves. Meantime he held them as a trust, and did everything he could to make them comfortable. If one of his slaves was discontented and ran away, which rarely happened, he did not try to bring him back. A young man from the North once said to him,

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"Judge, I do not see but the slaves are as happy as our laboring classes at the North." "Well," said the Judge, "I do the best I can to make my slaves comfortable, but I tell you, sir, you can not make a slave happy, do what you will. God Almighty never made a man to be a slave, and he can not be happy while he is a slave." "But," continued the Boston visitor, "what can be done about it, sir? They could not take care of themselves if set free." "I think I could show you three men on my plantation," replied Judge Speed, "who might go to the Kentucky Legislature. I am inclined to believe they would be as good legislators as the average men there now."

Evidently one of the three negroes referred to in Mr. Clark's story was a superb negro called Morocco. Many stories concerning this quiet, strong personality, which grew up under his master's kindly influence, have been told and retold in the family. Morocco was a very valuable piece of property, as he often transacted important business in the city for his owner. If he had had a family of children they would have been extremely valuable; but he never married. Whenever he was teased about being a woman-hater and an old bachelor, he would draw himself up to his full height and say:

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"I'm a slave an' I can't help it; but I can an' I will help bein' the father of any slaves."

As Liberia had been opened to the colonization of negroes in 1820, John Speed concluded that he would free Morocco and furnish him with funds to make the long trip. This occurred about 1833 when James Speed had just finished his studies and was in a law office in Louisville. It was arranged for the negro to go into town so that he might talk the matter over at length with his young master, who had posted himself on the country and its many possibilities. After Morocco had listened patiently to the careful explanation of the plans made for him, he asked:

"Marse James, what do you think about my goin'?"

"Why, with your sense and ability, Morocco, you might become the president of the country."

For a moment the negro was puzzled, then he asked cautiously, "Haven't they got a white president in that country?"

"No, all of the officials are negroes."

Morocco shook his head sadly and answered, "I reckon I'll stay here an' be a slave, Marse James."

"Why?"

"It's this way, if Liberia was worth livin' in there'd be lots and lots of white folks there, an'

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they'd have a white president. I ain't goin' to any country that ain't good enough for white folks to live in."

The following clippings have been carefully selected from three long articles which appeared in the *Louisville Courier*, 1849, from James Speed's pen, in answer to other articles written by one who signed himself "Observer":

But my object is not and never was to attack any man or set of men. When my first article was written, the modification of the law of 1833 had passed the Lower House of the General Assembly only. Since then it has passed the Senate, and there is no reason to believe that the Governor will not approve it. So the law of 1833 may be now regarded as virtually repealed. The modification of that law is, as I believe, fairly stated by Observer, and in my estimation, such a modification is a repeal.

The great and leading feature of the law of 1833 was that it prohibited citizens of Kentucky from buying and importing into this State slaves for any purpose. That great and leading feature of the law is repealed, and so, I think, the remainder is not worth having—the whole law had as well been swept from the statute book.

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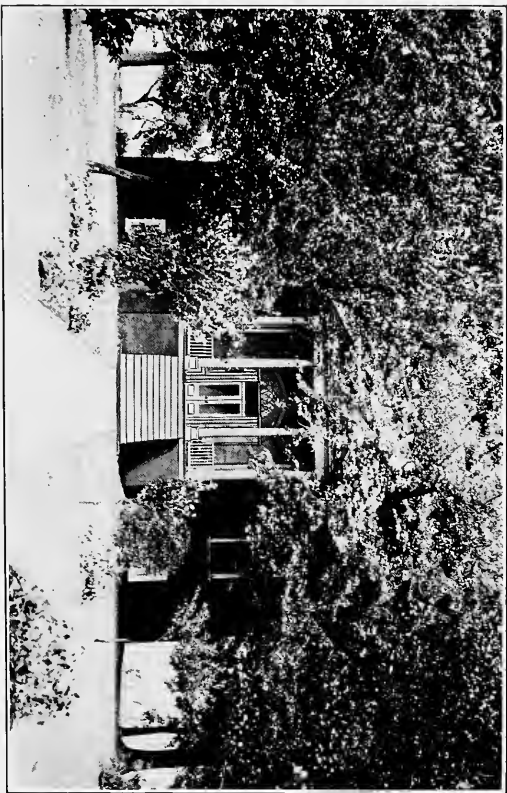
The reasons for ridding this State of slavery and permanently separating the white and black races by a process so gradual as to do no injury to the white man and good to the negro are so many, clear and cogent, that I would have to lose all faith in truth, and forget that man is prone to pursue his own happiness, before I can believe in the prediction of the perpetuation of slavery in Kentucky. Observer says that his desire was, and is, that slavery should remain undisturbed. This desire must originate from a belief that it is a blessing and should be perpetuated, or that it is an evil for which he has no remedy. I would like to know upon which horn of this dilemma he hangs. Either is a fair subject for debate. Speeches are made, books are written, and newspapers are published to establish truth and combat and expose errors and wrong. In this reading and thinking age the world is not content with the mere declaration that a writer desires slavery to remain undisturbed. The why and the wherefore are matters of consequence. If slavery be a blessing, show and prove it; if an evil, admit it to be your duty to search a remedy. Do not fold your hands in idleness, or carp at those who are doing without your aid, the work in which you should give them help.

Every one in the State must feel that he lives by the "sweat of his brow." If he works not with

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his hands, he does with his head; society has an organization so complex that there is a demand for all kinds of work that result in good to the individual and the community. Labor is to the individual and society what salt and motion are said to be to the great deep—they prevent stagnation and putrescence. It is right, it is necessary that labor should be respected and encouraged. Touch and affect it injuriously, and you injure the working man, the employer, and society in all their ramifications. Let us first glance at the effect produced by slave labor on the working man, I mean, all who from choice or necessity do that which is, or may be done by slaves.

It is said and sometimes gravely written that our slaves are only kept to do menial offices. These words *menial offices* seem to constitute a clap-trap, undefinable phrase. Those who use it show more clearly than any argument I can adduce that the institution of slavery has produced its worst effects upon their minds. Labor, honorable effort, and honest industry are degraded in their eyes. What are menial services? Is it to curry a horse, to bridle or feed one? Is it to drive a wagon, stage, carriage, hack, or dray, to follow the plow, handle an axe, or make a fire, or touch a tool or implement of any kind? Is the woman who sweeps up the room, or makes the bed, or cooks, or



FRONT DOOR AT "FARMINGTON"

Photo by Author

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washes or makes and mends the clothes of her husband and family guilty of the sin of doing menial offices? And does she thus become unworthy? If these things, taken individually, are not degrading, in what combination are they so? They are only so because of their combination or connection with slavery. Slavery thus robs labor of its dignity and true worth. The proud spirit of a freeman will not brook being linked with a degraded class; he will fly from the home of his fathers and seek a settlement in some community where his labor, his only reliance for a livelihood, will be respected, and where degradation will not attach to him or his family, because he has to do all sorts of work that may be necessary for his advancement in life. Any law that will admit a further influx of slaves will contribute to banish much of our native talent and enterprise. It is idle to say that those who go are acting upon false pride. As long as negroes are their co-workers and rivals for distinction they will feel degraded. Men live not for money only. Those of the lowest stations in life, as well as the highest, like to possess and to exercise the blessings that flow from association and intercourse with their fellow-man. The law of 1833 operated as a kind of protection to free labor. The white man was secure against the further competition and consequent degradation from an increase of the number of slaves in Kentucky.

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CHAPTER IV.

1849—1855

IN allowing the subject of this sketch to tell the major portion of his own story, it is necessary to use some fragments of other letters sent to his mother in '52, and a letter written in '55 to his brother Philip, and another to Mr. Thompson, of Shepherdsville, Kentucky, written the same year.

Although James Speed lived all of his early life in the out-of-doors, hunting and fishing and dreaming, still there were periods when his health seemed to break under the stress of heavy work and he was forced to leave home for short periods. It is very probable that when these attacks of low vitality were coming upon him he suffered most from depression. Strange as it may seem, however, as he grew older these despondent periods grew wider apart and eventu-

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ally they disappeared almost entirely. During one of these journeys to the East to recuperate, he sent his mother a series of letters which had nothing in them of political significance, but merely recorded his observations of men, women, and things as he traveled from place to place. They at least give some insight into his lifelong habit of observation and his ideas of what constituted "the mad rush" of the East as early as in '52.

Saratoga, July 18, 1852.

My Dear Mother:

. . . The crowd here is very great. To me they look like upstarts. They have left all their good sense at home, and brought nothing with them but cash and clothes.

I am astonished to see so many old men and women, from their manners and dress I should say that they were widowers and widows, or it may be that they have brought to this place "where men do most congregate," a commodity of ugly daughters. I never saw so many women together in my life, and their number is not as remarkable as their ugliness. They may be notable wives and affec-

James Speed

tionate daughters, but certainly they are not lovely women.

I am greatly pleased with the general appearance of the country. There is a general air of thrift, of comfort, of freshness and youthful vigor there that surprises me. Nothing looks old. Everything has an air of neatness and comfort. Whilst we of the South are prating about luxury, they of the North are practicing it. I have seen nothing but their hotels; they surpass us in them very far.

To-morrow morning I go to Boston. I do not know how or when I will go from there.

Boston, July 25, 1852.

My Dear Mother:

The morning here is pleasant in temperature and pleasanter in appearance. The Sabbath-like quiet and the sobered, staid demeanor in contrast with the fuss and bustle of yesterday is charming. They are all clean dressed and happy looking. Religious observances here, as I thus far see them, are ordered according to my notion. The Sabbath is a *day of rest*—not a day of *self-torture* and spiritual martyrdom. I will, however, see more of them before I make up my mind.

I have seen a great deal to interest me—nothing that has struck me as much as the jail and hospital. The beholder in examining them is assured “that

A Personality

there is a luxury in doing good." Bunker Hill Monument tells of the great dead; the hospital and jail are built for the future. Of the two, I think the jail the most wonderful. I was not prepared to see such a house—strong as stone and iron can make it, yet beautiful as a fairy castle; safe as a vault and yet it can be made as airy as a summer-house. All things ordered in reference to reform, not punishment. The persons in charge, educated gentlemen.

Indeed, Mother, these Yankees are a wonderful people.

Newport, August 1, 1852.

My Dear Mother:

. . . . As you will see from this letter, I am at Newport, and in the Ocean House.

To the man of cash and passion for display this is Elysium. It has its charms, too, for the quiet observer. The eye is constantly caught by new faces, new dresses, and new gaits. Here or elsewhere in Yankee-land, I have been greatly surprised to find the men of much better appearance than the women. This is the general rule; of course it has very marked exceptions. Some of the *genus homo* here are half monkey in dress, form, and gait.

I learn with surprise and sorrow that many of the dashing belles and flirts of the season are wives and mothers, whose husbands and children are at home. Such women are a disgrace to their sex.

James Speed

Newport, August 8, 1852.

My Dear Mother:

Again I pay my respects to you from Newport. Here it is a bright, bracing, beautiful morning; I hope that you have such a one, and the health and cheerfulness to enjoy it.

The past week has been checkered with me. The atmosphere, bathing, weather, and company have all been agreeable; but I am from home, distant from wife, children, and friends, and though not given to gloomy forebodings, my mind will, in the still watches of night or even in the bustle and throng of the day, feel curiously anxious as to how matters stand at home. I am too old or have too many of the actual cares and responsibilities of life to enter so heartily into the frivolous amusements of the places as to forget those behind me, or to be unmindful of the future.

New York, August 7, 1853.

My Dear Mother:

. . . . New York is the place in which the observances of the Sabbath can be appreciated above all things. In church and in church only, can you be still for a little while; there for a brief season you hear not the fuss and clatter and see not the rush and whirl of this restless world. Here it would seem that the still, small voice of God, for which the troubled spirit so eagerly listens,

A Personality

can only be heard in the holy silence of the church. Indeed, I felt that it was good to be there.

I am sick of New York. We would have gone to Long Branch yesterday, but for the storm. To-morrow I will go there or to Philadelphia. I don't think I will stay much longer; I must confess to a slight touch of homesickness. Should the malady grow much worse it will hurry me off to the other side of the mountains. I have not seen, nor can I hear of Lucy's whereabouts.

In the following letter written to his brother Philip in March, 1855, James Speed shows conclusively that although he had been a member of the Legislature, and had always been intensely interested in politics, he had absolutely nothing in his makeup of the politician pure and simple. It should be remembered in reading this letter that the Kansas-Nebraska controversy was still agitating the minds of the people. This letter shows very clearly his feelings concerning the Know Nothing Party, a party made up very largely of Whigs, a party that was non-committal concerning all questions of slavery, a party that

James Speed

was also evasive to all questions concerning its platform or its ultimate purposes, a party that was a secret, oath-bound organization, which opposed the nomination for office of any foreign-born citizens, and was antagonistic to the Catholic Church.

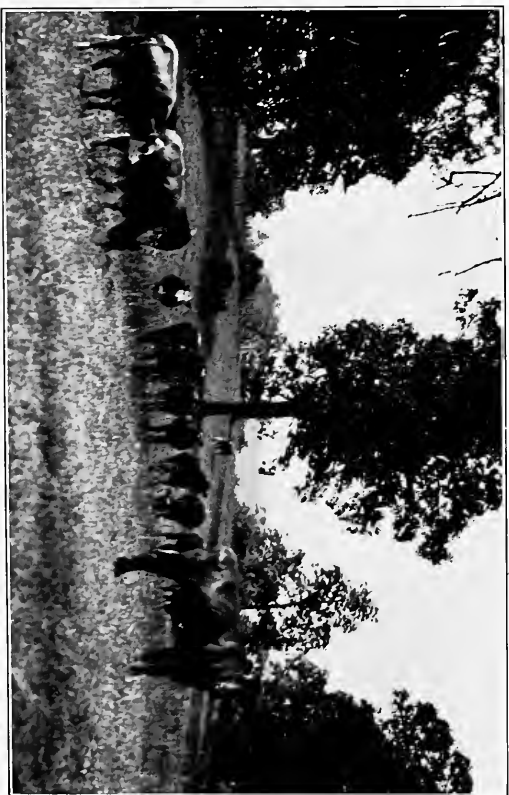
That James Speed in March, 1855, saw clearly what would happen in the near future, is amply borne out in his description of election day, which was written to a friend and fellow-lawyer, William R. Thompson, Esquire, of Shepherdsville, Kentucky.

Louisville, March 26, 1855.

Dear Philip:

"Semper Eadem."

Properly understood, the above is and ever will be my motto. As I understand it, it means true and an unfaltering allegiance to honesty and fair dealing. Openness, candor, boldness, and faith in the right are the constant attendants and firm supporters of honesty. When these concomitants are not, I am apt to suspect that there is also honesty wanting. These notions grew in use from



THE BROAD GREEN LAP OF KENTUCKY

Photo by Author

A Personality

or with Whiggery—I have fondly believed that they were the legitimate and natural fruit of Whig seed.

My Whiggery had ever taught me to advocate what I believe to be right, and further, that it was as much my duty to do it openly and without fear as to do it at all. Besides, I cherish as my life, religious liberty. The right to worship Almighty God according to the dictates of my conscience is one that I can surrender only with my life. I respect the right in others as much as I demand the exercise of the right in my person.

The Know Nothings seem to me to shirk, to keep in the dark. They have no avowed principles, and no declared candidates.

It may be that I would advocate or support what they want, but before I do I must know them as they know me. I will go for a man whose measures I oppose, but who declares them with an openness that is becoming, rather than one who makes no declaration of principles. In the last I may be cheated, in the first I can not, as I know the extent of his error.

No one can pretend that Mr. Clay ever was or could be a Know Nothing. Daring, gallant, open to a fault, by his very nature incapable of concealment—yet, strange to say, that party which he led so long, composed mainly of personal admirers, it is said have formed a secret junto or clique to

James Speed

accomplish their wishes. Let them think of him and blush; let them think of him and drink in some of his courage and frankness.

Indeed, my motto is "*Semper eadem*," always honest, always free from concealment, always ready to say who I am, what I am for, what I am against, whom I am for, and whom I am against. Much as I dislike slavery, much as I desire to see my much loved native State freed from the curse of slavery, I would not aid in organizing a secret party to effect that object. In such a party I see more danger than in slavery—such a party is equally powerful for ill as for good.

Who or what is safe in the hands of such a party? What principle of government is safe with such a party?

I have not ceased to be a Whig—"*Semper eadem*." My Whiggery makes me anti-Know Nothing. All the noble traits of character that so marked and distinguished its great leader forbid my association with such a party.

So much in great haste; come and see me—come and dine—I want to talk with you.

Louisville, September 8, 1855.

Wm. R. Thompson, Esq.,

Shepherdsville, Ky.

Dear Sir:

You ask me to state what I saw on the fourth

A Personality

day of August last, the day of the election. I do so cheerfully.

I went to vote before my breakfast about six o'clock. I found a crowd around the polls and great difficulty in getting in. There was a good deal of noise and much hollowing for Marshall.

I returned from my breakfast about eight o'clock and went directly into the courtroom when the votes were taken. The crowd, and a large and noisy one, was in the passage.

I remained in the room till about half past nine or ten o'clock a. m. Whilst there I heard the noise of several fights in the passage and saw from the window Irishmen and Germans beaten and chased from the courthouse yard.

When I came from the courtroom or the room in which the votes were taken into the passage, the crowd which had been in the passage had chased some foreigners into the yard east of the courthouse. I went to the east door of the courthouse and saw the crowd running down Sixth Street. I went back through the courthouse and out of the front door to my office in front of the courthouse. From my office I saw many men, Irish and German, beaten in the courthouse yard before dinner. It was not fighting man to man, but as many as could would fall upon a single Irish or German and beat him with sticks or short clubs—not walking canes, but short clubs. I advised all foreigners I saw after I

James Speed

came out of the courthouse and before I went to my dinner not to go near the courthouse. From the time I came out of the courthouse till dinner time the courthouse yard was occupied by a number of men and boys armed with short clubs, shouting, "Hurrah for Marshall! hurrah for Sam." They wore yellow tickets in their hats or on their breasts.

Soon after I returned from dinner, about half past two o'clock p. m., I saw a number of boys and men coming out of the courthouse armed with muskets and a great many armed with clubs. I inquired of Judge Bodley what it meant; he replied that the Germans, two hundred strong and armed with double-barrel shotguns, had taken possession of the polls in the first ward. I told him that it was not so and could not be so. He replied with warmth, showing that he believed it to be true.

I was about my office till after five o'clock. Before I left the office or the neighborhood, I saw many Irishmen carried to jail all covered with blood.

Near five o'clock and before I left the office, an infuriated crowd wearing the yellow ticket came yelling down Jefferson Street, guarding an Irishman to jail, who was all covered with blood and so weak that he had to be supported to walk. A man with the same yellow ticket badge followed just after him with an iron pitchfork. Betwixt the front gate of the courthouse yard and Sixth Street, the

A Personality

crowd or guard took after a little German who was going up Jefferson Street. They raised the shout, "move him." He ran pursued by the crowd. He was stricken many times before he got to the courthouse yard gate. Soon after he got into the yard he was knocked down and most unmercifully beaten. To escape the blows he crawled under the Know Nothing stand, and from where I stood I thought the man with the iron fork stabbed him when under there. In this I am told I was mistaken. They dragged him from under the stand more dead than alive and carried him to jail on their shoulders, the crowd yelling to make the damned rascal walk. I still think that the man with the pitchfork struck the man when down.

I know that the courthouse and courthouse yard was in the possession and under the control of Know Nothing bullies from nine o'clock till night or until the foreigners were so frightened that they would not come about there.

The foreigners came to the courthouse in the morning, not in crowds, but singly and without clubs or arms of any kind. I saw no foreigner misbehave or do or say an insolent thing. The Know Nothings had clubs and yelled incessantly.

About dinner time I saw a small German knocked from the front steps or from the upper platform to the bottom. I thought that the fall

James Speed

would kill him. They ran down, beat him with clubs as he got up, and as he ran pelted him with stones. A man met him and knocked him down. Captain Reauseau got up where they were and saved him.

When I was in the courtroom I heard that the Honorable Will P. Thomasson was struck when attempting to save an Irishman. I saw Mr. Thomasson soon after and saw the wound or bruise on his cheek. He told me that he had been struck for trying to keep the mob off of an Irishman they were pursuing.

I am, sir, most respectfully,

Your obt. servt. and friend,

JAMES SPEED.

A Personality

CHAPTER V.

1861—1865

AT the outbreak of the Civil War James Speed's life became a strenuous one. He was made the mustering officer for the State of Kentucky, and the soldiers who answered the first calls for volunteers were mustered into the United States army by him. During this early part of the war when the fate of his native State hung for a long time in the balance, he and his brothers were continually busy. He, his brothers, and his sisters had all grown up in an abolition atmosphere, and he himself was so opposed to slavery that he never owned a slave. Perhaps this last statement is a little extreme, as he did happen to own one slave for a very short time. It seems that one day while passing the Courthouse he saw a number of negroes being sold at auction. When he paused he

James Speed

discovered a half-grown negro girl crying bitterly. Learning that she was to be sold because of the failure of her owner and that there was grave danger of her being taken South and away from her whole family, he bought her. She was frail at the time and died not very much later of tuberculosis. It was the only slave he ever owned.

In 1861 he again went to Frankfort, Kentucky, this time to represent his own district in the State Senate. It was at this time that the General Government proposed to pay for the slaves held in Kentucky, and he was the only member of the Senate to support the measure. In one of his speeches at that time he took the ground that all the effects of slavery must be evil, and that it was best to abolish it as soon and as easily as possible.

Among the papers in the family there is only one written by James Speed in '61, immediately after his election to the State Senate, and soon after he had resigned his position as Com-

A Personality

mander of the Louisville Home Guard, which took place July 2, 1861. A portion of the letter which follows gives an idea of the troubles which men who were in the thick of the fight were subjected to.

Louisville, September 17, 1861.

L. W. Andrews, Esq.,
Flemingsburg, Ky.

Dear Sir:

Your letter of the fifteenth is just at hand; like you, I have been annoyed beyond measure at the swindling I see going along. It is really distressing to see how many men I see in our midst who are trying to make money out of our great trouble. Such a crisis as this gives to us a clear and deep insight into human nature and poor humanity suffers from the view.

I assure you, sir, that I had hardly finished reading your letter before I was beset by three men desiring me to indorse their papers that they might get contracts, and have been several times stopped to hold talks about getting contracts. I am bothered beyond description in such matters. Now, if I am so pestered, how must it be with the quartermaster? Indeed I pity him. He has a hard place to fill and should be a keen, rough,

James Speed

shrewd man. With all the vigilance that he can use he must be now and then cheated. I will do what I can to guard him. The business of the department is hard to keep up and give satisfaction.

As to news here. We are greatly in doubt about the strength of Buckner's army. Some say that it is large and well organized, others that it is small and badly organized and ill-armed. They may be well informed in military circles. It is also doubted whether the railroad bridge over Green River has been destroyed. To-day the impression is that it has not. It seems to be well understood that the Rebels are fortifying Bowling Green. They have been also busy destroying the fords over Green River. This, some say, is a mere blind, an effort to conceal a purpose to advance, others that it is done to keep our forces from advancing against them. We have also contradictory reports as to the conduct of the Rebels below Green River. At first they behaved pretty well. Lately they have been committing many outrages.

Enlisting in our army is improving here. Those amongst us can sympathize that the traitors are silenced. It seems to me that with silence on their part the bitterness of feeling is somewhat subsided.

Let me hear from you whenever you have any matter of interest.

I am, sir, your most obedient servant,

JAMES SPEED.

A Personality

It is indeed fortunate that in the year 1863 James Speed's wife should have happened upon his old diary of 1844. Evidently, on the spur of the moment she decided to write a diary of her own. Several quotations are used here to precede a great number of extracts from letters which James Speed wrote to his mother from Washington in 1864, 1865, and 1866.

March 11, 1863.

Nineteen years have passed away since my husband's last entry into this diary, commenced and ended in the spring of 1844. What changes have taken place since this journal of my husband's was thrown aside, and deeply do I regret that he did not continue to note those changes as they occurred, for though sad in much, yet much that was pleasant likewise has passed, and to our children it would have been gratifying to look over the events of their childhood and youth, traced in the familiar character and style belonging to their father.

.

To-day my good husband is fifty-one years old, and to my eyes looks younger than he did ten years ago. As he advances his health grows better

James Speed

and he is able to bear more physically than when younger. The troublous times in which we are now involved, and the constant causes for apprehension from the amount of secessionism in our goodly State, and the desperate efforts all loyal men have been compelled to make to keep the Southern cunning from overcoming and drawing her into the vortex—all this has not made *him* depressed or gloomy, but rather added to the buoyancy of his spirits and certainly to his physical strength.

Within the limits of a diary the present condition of our country can not be more than glanced at, but if my plan in this is carried out, the events as they occur will be noted and may to some of my descendants form an interesting book of reference. As I before said, 'tis my husband's birthday, and in honor to that event will go make him some hard gingerbread, which he loves as much as any child.

March 13, 1863.

Not every day can I find time or material to write in this my diary, yet feel that having commenced it, I must for consistency's sake keep up as regularly as possible.

This dear good husband, to whom I belong, throws cold water on every effort I make to leave home . . . or some other equally good reason, never thinking that it is purely selfish and arises

A Personality

from dislike to having the old familiar face out of its usual place. Generous in most things—in this consent to my home-leaving he can not afford to be aught but miserly. Well, I can not blame him, for we have no daughter or other feminine to take my place, and so the home would be lonely; but he leaves me and that right often, but very seldom from choice. He has just been released by his term ending in the Senate of our State. That has taken up much of his time owing to the frequent call of the Legislature to meet, to dispose of the increased business consequent on the unsettled condition of our country. . . .

This has all been easy to them, because of their being a loyal majority, but how long this may be, time only can tell, for on the eighteenth of this month a convention will be held in our city to decide on proper candidates for Governor and other important State officers, election to come off in August, and should the secession party be allowed to nominate theirs too, they would soon be in a majority, for our true men are off serving their country, and their privilege is lost; not being behind the scenes I can not tell how things are to be managed, but will trust to the sagacity of our leaders to manage right.

The intimacy between Lincoln and the Speed family dated from the day when the slender,

James Speed

uncouth young lawyer drifted into the general merchandise store, kept by Joshua F. Speed at Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln was looking for some cheap furniture with which to equip a room for himself, while waiting for practice. Not having the price of even the cheapest set, Joshua Speed offered him the use of the room that he occupied above the old store and they became bosom friends. Lincoln paid several visits to "Farmington," the Speed home, during the ensuing years; frequently he rode into Louisville on horseback to sit in James Speed's office and chat with him about slavery and the questions of the day. When Lincoln became President of the United States he was extremely anxious to have his closest friend, Joshua F. Speed, as a member of his cabinet. Joshua Speed, however, felt that his post of duty was at home in Kentucky, where tremendous efforts must be made to hold that State within the Union. Both James and Joshua Speed were

A Personality

busy during the early part of the Rebellion in handling any number of delicate situations which were constantly arising.

One bleak November day, 1864, when James Speed sat with his feet before a blazing fire in his office in Louisville, Kentucky, a telegram was handed him. For a moment it was difficult for him to get his mind off the important papers which he was reading in one of the suits brought by the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. The telegram was from Lincoln telling him that Mr. Bates had resigned as Attorney-General of the United States, and the position was tendered him. It is not necessary at this point to write more than to say the letters which follow give his own ideas of his position and what he felt he might be able to do in that position for his country and the State.

Washington, December 5, 1864.

Dear Mother:

I have seen the President this morning and consented to take the office tendered, in the event

James Speed

my nomination is confirmed by the Senate. He desired that I should qualify at once and have the confirmation to follow. As the Senate is in session, I thought it best not to qualify until the nomination shall be confirmed. In this, it would seem that I have been singular, but I am acting from the dictates of common sense, and I am sure that I am right. When I feel sure that I am right notions of etiquette and mere conventionalities make no impression upon me.

Now, my dear Mother, you see that I am upon the eve of assuming a very elevated, dignified, and responsible office. My personal friends, or the few that I have consulted, think that I should accept. It is with unaffected diffidence that I will do so. For the honesty of purpose and diligent habits of your son, I am sure you shall never have occasion to be ashamed. If God and Nature have not endowed him with ability equal to the station, he can not help it. I will work hard and honestly for the good and glory of my country, and leave the consequences to God, in a firm faith that He will order all things for the best.

The call was sudden and unexpected. It looks to me much like leaving my old home and life-long friends forever. Yet in a great crisis like this, we must fling behind us all such considerations.

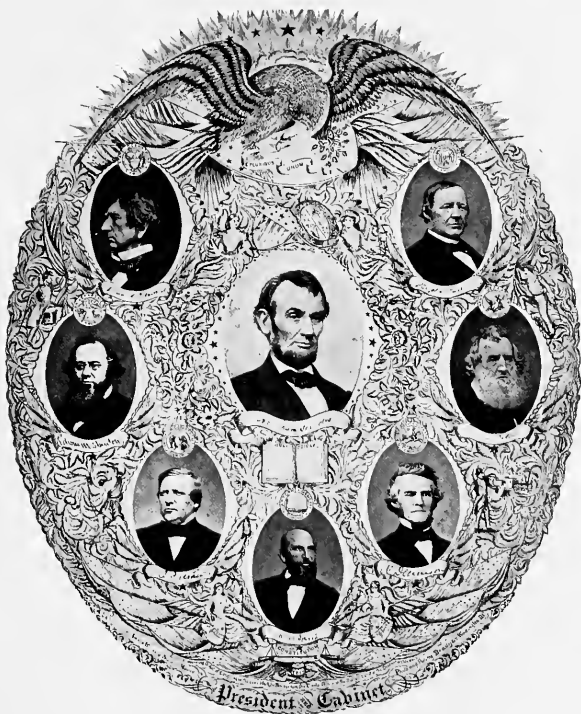


Photo by Brady of Washington
 PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND CABINET



A Personality

Washington, December 11, 1864.

Dear Mother:

I am pleased to learn from gentlemen of both sides, opposition men and administration men, that they never saw Congress open with as little bitterness of feeling. Such a state of things just following so fierce a canvass speaks well for the stability of our republican institutions. The overwhelming vote for Mr. Lincoln rebuked so severely this spirit of faction that it has had to retire for a season to gather hope and courage. But that demonlike spirit will not remain quiet long; after a while it will be at work again. Why, for what, and when will it rise again, no man can tell. As sure, however, as man's evil passions compose a part of his nature, so surely will there be a future exhibition of a merely factious spirit.

I find that the labor of my office will be great; with a watchful care over my health and habits, I think that I will get through them.

Washington, December 18, 1864.

Dear Mother:

The change I have made is a sudden and great one and the responsibilities and labors of the office even greater than the change I have made. I will watch my health, do my best, and cheerfully meet the consequences so far as I am personally con-

James Speed

cerned. If, notwithstanding my diligence, I shall commit mistakes by which the country shall suffer, it will be painful to me. That chance I must meet, too.

My own health, I think, is good, if not better than when I left home. I have two very good rooms and take my meals at a clean home, where the feed and company are both very agreeable to me. As to creature comforts, I am as well off as a man can be, who happens to have it ground into him that things are not worth considering unless looked after and presided over by a fond wife.

Washington, January 1, 1865.

Dear Mother:

I am glad to say that I never was in better health in my life. Fortunately, hard work has become a necessity to me. By the way, where do I get that disposition from? Neither the Speed nor the Fry men, according to my knowledge, have been fond of work.

The day here has been beautifully clear, but very cold, and is growing constantly colder.

Though at the fountain-head of all news, I never hear any till it is stale. I am so occupied with the law department of the Government that I have not time even to hear or ask the news.

A Personality

Washington, January 8, 1865.

Dear Mother:

These times and my situation here are giving to me, in some things, a queer experience. Last Sunday I received a letter from a lady in Philadelphia, a native Kentuckian and claiming to be intensely loyal, seeking my influence to get her only son in the Naval Academy. The next day I received a letter from her sister in Little Rock, Arkansas, telling me that her only son is a Rebel prisoner at Johnson's Island and earnestly asking, in consideration of her nativity, that I should get him paroled.

Since I have held this office I find that I have more acquaintances and friends in all parts of the country than I had dreamed of. They seem to know me, and I don't care to know them.

Washington, January 15, 1865.

Dear Mother:

During the last week I have been to two great dinners—one given by Mr. Jordan, Solicitor of the Treasury, and one by Mr. Hooper, member of Congress from Massachusetts, and a very wealthy merchant. As for the eating, I have taken and enjoyed very many dinners at your house in the country and in town much more than either of them. We had nothing at either dinner as good

James Speed

as jowl and turnip greens, or pig's head and hominy. The table appointments at Mr. Hooper's were splendid. But I will try to go over again the whole affair as it may be of interest to you.

I was invited at six, and was there at the minute. I was ushered into a very elegantly furnished and splendidly lighted parlor, where there was one gentleman. He stepped forward and gracefully introduced himself, being Professor Agaziz. In a short time Mr. and Mrs. Hooper and Miss Motley entered; soon after the other guests arrived, being ten gentlemen to the two ladies. Mrs. Hooper is a very pretty young woman, and very tastefully dressed. Miss Motley, young, vigorous, and over dressed; the dress and not the woman arrested the attention. On looking around at the gentlemen I found them all dressed in swallow-tailed coats, except myself, and nicely fixed up at all points from head to heel. I looked upon it as a mere conventionality of which I had not been appraised and so thought no more of it. It did strike me, however, as a little odd that Professor Agaziz, Mr. Secretary Seward, Admiral Farragut, and Chief Justice Chase should make a point on dress. At about half past six o'clock the folding doors were drawn and three large parlors, all splendidly furnished and brilliantly lighted, were thrown together; in the farther one of the three was the table. The doors were drawn so noiselessly that the table, all decked with

A Personality

flowers and glittering with silver, seemed to have been placed there by enchantment. The Chief Justice was on the right of Mrs. Hooper with Mr. Secretary of State on her left; Admiral Farragut on the right of Mr. Hooper, with the Attorney-General on his left. We had many courses, but your son recognized nothing but soup, fish, sweet-breads, and green peas. Not knowing how many courses we were to have or what they were to be I took a little of everything that I might be sure to get enough. I was of course careful not to eat much of anything. We had most excellent wines—Port, Sherry, Hoche, Champagne, and Madeira. About nine o'clock the ladies retired, all rising and bowing them out. After the ladies left we had cigars and wound up just before ten o'clock with a glass of seltzer water to each.

I slept well that night and rose the next morning with a clean head and a good appetite for my breakfast and my work. I opine, however, that most of the gentlemen did not feel as well the next day as I.

This is about as good a description of a dinner as I can give.

Mr. Jordan's dinner, though nothing like equal to Mr. Hooper's in show and cost, was really much more pleasant, the company seemed to be better assorted, and the conversation unfagging and

James Speed

brilliant. At Mr. Hooper's we had one gentleman who wanted all to listen when he talked. At Mr. Jordan's we had no such bore.

Washington, March 28, 1865.

My Dear Mother:

The newspapers will give you as good an idea of the grand review as you can get upon paper. The truth is it surpassed all description. I had no idea that Sherman's army was as large, and in appointments and appearance it surpassed all my expectations.

Most persons seem to think that our troubles are all over. We have the welcome news that Kirby Smith has surrendered. This makes it certain that there will be no more great battles, probably nothing beyond mere guerrilla fights. But many difficulties remain to be settled, and unless the people of the South act wisely and act promptly, great suffering is still in store for them. If they will frankly and fully acknowledge the freedom of the black man and give to him the chance for improvement and elevation, their burden will be greatly lessened. On the other hand, if they discover anxiety again to enslave him, he will be kept in a state of uncertainty and unrest, and all the bad conduct incident, and necessarily incident to such a feeling must be expected. The task imposed upon them is a severe one. To fling off at

A Personality

a single effort lifelong prejudices is a difficult matter for a whole people.

Washington, April 10, 1865.

Dear Mother:

I got back from Richmond yesterday evening. The trip was a sad one, oh, so sad. My instincts all told me not to go—I could not refuse without giving offense. All the business part of the town is in ruins. The white people looked dejected and subdued beyond description. I could have wept from pure sympathy. So strong was my sympathy that for a time I forgot that they were but reaping the fruits of the trees they had planted. As God's judgments are righteous, they must suffer. But enough of this sad subject. It is painful to think over what I saw and yet it is right that I should have seen it. My future notions and conduct will be greatly modified by what I did see.

Washington, April 16, 1865.

Dear Mother:

I seize a moment's pause in the Cabinet to say to you that I am well and remember you and my duty to you with all dutiful respects.

Our troubles are huge. The labors upon me by consequence are great. I hope that I may be able to perform my duty and my whole duty to the country. That I have the love and prayers of a

James Speed

good Mother is a consolation to me. The best and greatest man I ever knew, and one holding just now the highest and most responsible position on earth, has been taken from us, but do not be down-cast and hopeless. This great Government was not bound up in the life of any one man. The great and true principles of self-government will under God be worked out by us or by better men.

Washington, April 17, 1865.

Dear Joshua:

The death of the President, who was the greatest and best man I ever knew, will, of course, greatly increase my labors and responsibilities.

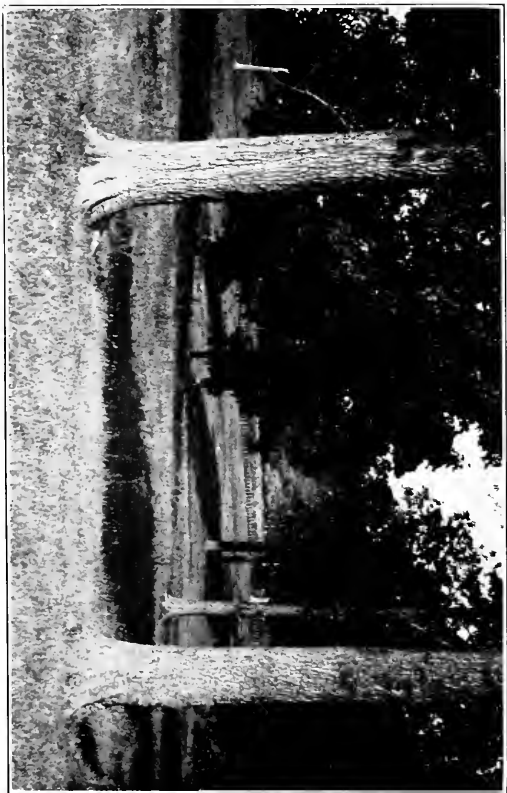
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Now, each man must stand to his place—no flinching; I think that matters will go on just as before. I do not think that I can come home soon. Have you a full and sufficient power of attorney?

Washington, April 30, 1865.

My Dear Mother:

I am in full health, and thanks to an inheritance from you, of undying hope. My faith in the right is unfaltering and firm and cheerful in hope. Beautiful and bright are the days before us. We must, from this day forth, show mercy, charity, and forgiveness to those who have wildly and madly



TEMPERED BY THE FARMER'S KINDLY TOUCH

Photo by Author



A Personality

sinned. How much sweeter duty than that of slaughtering them with the terrible engines of war. That from the seeds of mercy and forgiveness now to be planted may spring the sweet blossoms and life-giving fruits of peace is the earnest wish of my heart. I will labor to the end that love shall overcome hate.

Cataract House,
Niagara Falls, June 6, 1865.

Dear Mother:

I did not forget you on Sunday, nor do I feel guilty of neglect. I was at Detroit and so busy all day that I had not time to write. I had hoped to be able to come to Louisville from Detroit, but business has brought me here, and from here I must return to my post.

I came yesterday from Detroit to this place through Canada. There was on the train a large delegation of merchants from Milwaukee, Chicago, and Detroit, going to visit the merchants of Boston on invitation. The Canadians set apart for them three splendid cars. The delegation was greeted at every village with shouts and huzzahs. The merchants of London, Canada, gave them a splendid dinner. The dining hall was hung around with American and English flags most lovingly intertwined. Toasts were given to our President, to our flag, and to our country. The bands played

James Speed

"Yankee Doodle" with a will. The Canadians are now, since they see the might of Uncle Sam, not only friendly, but overflowing with *pure* love.

I traveled incog., *i. e.*, I did not let it be known that I was Attorney-General. What I saw and heard made me proud of my country. Not quite a year ago I was here and was advised not to cross the river for fear of an insult. Now, the Southern refugees in Canada, then such braggarts, are in deep and humiliating disgrace. Of course, some of them are innocent of the terrible crimes that others have been guilty of. It is to be regretted, and yet in this world the innocent must often suffer with us for the guilty.

I heard yesterday a very characteristic story of Mr. Lincoln that you may not have seen or heard.

His messenger came into his room one evening and said, "Mr. President, there is a woman in the anteroom who has been there all day, and has done nothing but weep." "Show her in," said Mr. Lincoln. He received her in his usual kind manner. She told her story. Her husband and three sons had joined the Federal army. The husband had been killed. She had other small children and could not support them. She asked that her oldest boy might be discharged to aid her. Sitting down he said, "I have three and you have none." He gave her the discharge. She found her way to

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the Army of the Potomac with the discharge and found that her boy had been killed the day before. Getting her paper properly indorsed, she sought Mr. Lincoln again. Mr. Lincoln read it and said, "I have two and you have none; your second boy shall be discharged." When he sat down to write the good woman came up and as he wrote she ran her fingers through his hair.

Washington, June 17, 1865.

Dear Mother:

I have been very busy lately trying to tame the wild Irish. I trust that they will be more quiet in the future.

Now and then I meet with a man as wild about our home affairs as an Irishman is about the Emerald Isle. Yesterday I saw a man of position, learning, and talent, who has been all the time loyal, who believes that we are rushing into a second revolution more rapidly than we did into the first. He was a Democrat all of his long life till the war. Having the good sense and pluck to go for his country and against his party during the war, he has not the firmness to hold on. Old hatreds and old affections are reviving and controlling him. I was both amused and instructed by his earnest and decided talk. The slang and catch words of dead parties were rolled from his mouth

James Speed

with a relishing smack of his lips. I saw and felt that it was folly now as of old to put new wine into old bottles.

I take it that Kentucky will be wildly mad over the proposed constitutional amendment. If she will only think and talk earnestly, honestly, and calmly all will work out right. Have but little hope that she will do so. She gets foolishly mad upon every new question.

Has it never occurred to you that Mr. Clay's great name has been an injury to Kentucky during our troubles? He was a great popular leader, was a giant in that line. Kentucky was silly enough to think that his strength and power were hers, and chaffed and fretted because the pigmies that she put in his place did not wield the power that she supposed she had infused into them. With Mr. Clay to lead she was a power in the land; with his petty successors she sunk out of sight.

Washington, July 3, 1865.

Dear Mother:

Your old Mother Virginia is not only in trouble but great suffering. Much of my time is taken up in talking with her penitent sons. I feel deeply for them. They have been very strongheaded, but are a brave, generous people, and I must feel for and with them. They acknowledged themselves

A Personality

as beaten—fairly whipped. They made the acknowledgment frankly but proudly. I honor them for their frankness and their pride and will do all I can to alleviate and shorten their sufferings.

Washington, September 10, 1865.

Dear Mother:

. . . I see a great many gentlemen from the South, indeed. Washington is crowded with them. I am happy to believe that they are not only willing but anxious to come back into the fold and shelter under the old flag. They exhibit no bitterness, generally acknowledge with a manly frankness that commands respect that they were wrong, but honestly so. Mr. Seward, who has been regarded by them as their bitterest enemy, and they hated him accordingly, seems now to be their pet. Each and all of them are anxious to see him, and when they do see him they greet him with hearty and unaffected cordiality. Mr. Seward is a man of great talents, of exalted and well regulated ambitions, and of as kind and good heart as ever beat in the bosom of a man. He is pleased and touched by the generous sympathy thus manifested by those whom he knew but lately hated him. For four years past we have been seeing human nature in its worst aspects; the scene is changing and much more rapidly than I had hoped. I do most fondly believe that the spirit of love will soon roll back the

James Speed

dark and terrible clouds that have hung over and about us. The faces of the Southern men are as a bow of promise, and we love to gaze upon it. May the day soon come when throughout this land we shall be all brothers. My desire is to aid in accomplishing that, my labor to find out the way to do it.

It is very fortunate indeed that several letters of Joshua Fry Speed to his brother James Speed have lately been unearthed, which give in very clear and forceful manner his attitude toward the questions of the day. The following letter is especially fine in that it takes up in a short, crisp way what he thought of the right to secede on the part of any State.

Louisville, September 15, 1865.

My Dear James:

If I understand anything of public sentiment, I think I can plainly see that there will be no organization anywhere in favor of returning to the old system. The antagonisms in the party organizations before the country will be upon the right of suffrage being extended to the negro. Under the Constitution as I read it, I can not see how the General Government can have anything to do with

A Personality

the question. You must have some nucleus of loyal men to begin with. They should be sustained by the General Government in their action, whenever their action did not conflict with the Constitution of the United States.

I think that the right to secede on the part of a State is not more absurd than for the General Government to claim to control the status of suffrage in the States. As well might she claim to control the relation of husband and wife, guardian and ward, the laws of decent country roads, street horses, jacks and jennies, wolf scalps and dog laws.

Mr. Seward once said to me that he dreaded the settlement of questions resulting from the war more than he did the war itself. That war was a question of muscle and money both of which could be measured by calculation. But that he knew of no rule by which you could calculate upon the follies, politicians, and party organizations. I often think of the wisdom of his remarks.

Washington, September 24, 1865.

Dear Mother:

I have heretofore said nothing about it because I feared disappointment, but I had confidently expected to see you the last of this month. I am disappointed. The President has determined to accept the invitation to visit Richmond and

James Speed

Raleigh, and desires to be accompanied by as many of his Cabinet as possible. Now, it is impossible for me to say when I can come home. I must balance the pleasure of doing my duty against the pleasure of seeing you and my relatives and friends about Louisville. I feel, dear Mother, that you would be glad to see me, but not at the cost of neglected duty. The President feels that it is his duty to do all that is in his power to make the two sections friendly again and as speedily as possible, and with that hope will go the last of next week to Richmond and Raleigh. When he gets back he can or ought to go North. If he makes both visits I will get as much rest as I will need. I say rest, when it is uncertain whether the fuss and muss into which I will be thrown will be rest. Somehow or other I can not become fond of jam of eager crowds. To be known to all and yet know no one is particularly disagreeable to me. It would be a great pleasure to be occasionally *incog*. The world does not know how little positions and responsibility change the heart and tastes of a man. They do not increase his disposition and I think his ability for labor, whereas the world seems to think that he is eager to make a show for himself. Not by our lips but by our lives, not by our promises but by our works would we be known. The man or men that can make this country peaceful, happy, and prosperous must work patiently, constantly, and avoid

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all deluding and delusive shows for show's sake. They must forget themselves. In this the President is a remarkable man. I have seen him intimately since he went into his great office, and can say with confidence that he is a patriot and as unselfish as Mr. Lincoln was. Mr. Lincoln made mistakes, but he was honest and the country and the world forgave him. Mr. Johnson may make mistakes, but if he does they will be unselfish and he will be honest.

Washington, October 1, 1865.

Dear Mother:

. . . . You would be astonished to see how the Southern people flock to Washington. Mohammedans do not look more anxiously to or visit Mecca more devoutly than they do to Washington. If our conduct shall only be as wise as our wishes are ardent for the right, this will soon be a united and happy country. After writing the foregoing sentence, I threw my eyes out of the window and saw full before me the unfinished monument to Washington. How fit and proper it was that during the late struggle it should have remained as it is. The work that he so nobly begun is yet incomplete. Like Paul, he planted; as Apollos, we must water. We have had to water with blood but the blood of martyrs fertilizes the soil. When we were dissevered, hating and fighting each other, no lick

James Speed

was struck upon the shaft, and I hope that none will be till we are again at peace and love shall reign and hold sway throughout the land. I do most fervently pray and honestly work for the coming of that good time. It is a strengthening thought to know that I have the prayers of one of the best and kindest Mothers.

Washington, October 21, 1865.

Dear Mother:

. . . A gentleman, lately the Rebel Governor of a Rebel State, came here for pardon. He called on me, was modest, gentlemanly, but wonderfully anxious; and well he might be, as his fortune had been sacrificed and he had a wife and children to whom he was devotedly attached, dependent upon him. After a short, official, and formal interview, we parted. That evening I sent his pardon to the President. The next morning on calling to pay his respects to the President, it was delivered to him. Soon afterward he came running and out of breath, wild with joy as a bird just freed from a cage. I said to him pleasantly, "You look like a man who had just made friends with a fond and good wife, whom he had treated unkindly." Jumping to his feet he said, "That approximates my feelings but does not reach them. They are indescribable." The prodigal son and the family

A Personality

to which he is returning are equally full of gladness. I have seen eyes that did not quail before the sabre's gleam or the cannon's flash rain tears of joy, the voice that was steady and clear amidst the din and peril of battle choke up and fail. The European habit of embracing and kissing amongst men is fast coming in vogue. I am thankful for, oh, how thankful for this good time coming. And I am especially thankful, dear Mother, on this bright beautiful Sabbath morning to be able to thank you for instilling into my mind and heart the principles and feelings from which so much joy comes to me.

Many persons, and they are loyal and good people too, believe that all this show of good and generous feeling from the South is either delusive or hypocritical. They're mistaken. I *know* they are mistaken. It would be a miracle if some of them were not hypocrites, but it is impossible that of the almost countless number I have seen, anything like a majority should be. Trust, love, and hope beam as directly from their faces as does light from a cloudless sun. Of course, they are anxious about their future and it is right that they should be. But with their anxiety there is a trusting hope and a firm purpose to work hard and a determination to *educe* good out of this seeming evil. And they will do it. The legitimate fruits of good intentions and good deeds will in due time ripen

James Speed

to bless mankind. I believe that this is true as firmly as I believe in an ever-ruling, all-wise, and all-good Providence.

The diary begun by James Speed in 1844 and discontinued after about six weeks of notes was again written in by his wife in 1863. Some extracts from this diary of that date have been used. Again, November 2, 1865, there is a short paragraph or two, which are given below.

November 2, 1865.

"The best laid schemes o' men and mice gang aft a-gley," as is shown in this continuation of my husband's diary. Over two years have elapsed since I determined, for our children's sake, to take up and continue this journal of passing events, but many things have occurred to prevent. When last written in, our country was involved in a Civil War; now Peace reigns, though the South is still suffering from the effects of her evil course. A country after four years' war must be involved in great trouble, especially the conquered party. The North never was more prosperous; indeed, her prosperity continued throughout the war.

In December, 1864, Mr. Speed was appointed Attorney-General by President Lincoln. In April

A Personality

the Southern army surrendered, and on fourteenth of same month our beloved President was shot in Ford's Theatre by Wilkes Booth. The Vice-President and Cabinet were doomed to the same fate, but escaped through the cowardice of accomplices. Mr. Seward, Secretary of State, was attacked when on a sickbed, and seriously injured, but escaped with life. His son Frederick was terribly beaten on the head, fracturing his skull, but he, too, is now nearly well, and to-night my husband has gone to a dinner party there, given to a deputation sent from Tunis, Africa, to condole with our Government on the assassination of our President.

Washington, D. C., November 19, 1865.

Dear Mother:

. . . A government, and especially a government framed as ours is, like a great orchestra, each performer must do his part just as it is set down, relying that all the rest will do the same, and if each and all play their parts exactly, a grand harmony is the result; whereas, if any one fails there must be a jar and discord. Poets talk of the music of the spheres, the grand symphony of Nature because of the beautiful, exact, and eternal harmony of God's laws; man, that would obey God, must seek to approach the harmony of this system.

My life latterly has been one routine of labor, but labor of kind that constantly tempts me to

James Speed

overdo the matter. The crowds of Southern people that were here as pardon-seekers have gradually fallen off. I am satisfied that very few of even the most cultivated Southerners appreciate the difficulties before them. In perfect good faith they desire to be in harmony and at peace with the United States, but they do not or can not see what is necessary to bring about that peace and perpetuate the desired harmony.

Washington, December 3, 1865.

Dear Mother:

The members of Congress are nearly all here. Some six weeks or two months ago I expected that they would not come together in good humor; from appearances I will be most agreeably disappointed. Of course there will be a very great diversity of opinion amongst them, but it looks now like it would not be angry. The Copper Heads are in so small a minority that they attract very little attention. They will remain quiet for a time, and only appear when they see a chance of creating and widening a division in the Union ranks.

I trust that the Southern men who may be here will behave with a becoming and dignified modesty. By such a course they will soon win the respect and confidence of the loyal men; whereas, anything like the old-fashioned arrogance will cause them to be kept off and distrusted.

A Personality

Washington, 1865.

Dear Mother:

As all special pardons are granted through this department of the Government, I am daily brought in contact with a great number of Southern people. Judging from those whom I see, your friend, Mr. Fitzgerald, is right. The South will return to the fold promptly, and without the bitterness that was anticipated. It is true that the blow they have received has been severe and their defeat unexpected and terrible, but it required such a stunning blow and such terror to bring them to their senses. Here we must be kind but firm. Of the first quality I feel that I have enough and to spare; of the last I have enough not to pardon one of them—not a mother's son—not only upon the condition that they free the negroes they have, but that they never will hereafter in this life and upon this earth own any property in slaves or make use of slave labor. Their hired servants and employes must hereafter be free persons. Some of the Virginians and South Carolinians gag awfully when the pill is first presented, but so far none have refused to take it, and, without an exception, after it has been swallowed, they improve rapidly. It seems to renew their sight and the present and future look much brighter than ever before. Each man that accepts a pardon with such conditions insists that no exceptions should be made. This they may do

James Speed

upon the principle that the fox advised his fellows to cut off their tails, but they say not. They say that they are lifted to a more elevated standpoint and to a purer and a cleaner atmosphere, and that they really see many things that they could not before, or differently from what they saw them before, and I believe them. The truth is we have emancipated them from error, false notions, and from sin. In this I hope that I am doing great good to our country and to mankind.

Washington, December 24, 1865.

Dear Mother:

To know anything of such a morning as this it must be seen and felt; neither words nor memory can give an adequate idea of it. There is a slush in the street about two inches deep and a slush in the air almost as thick. It rains up and it rains down, it rains to the right and to the left, before and behind; just such a day as invites one to look out of the window and remember the bright days that are gone, never to be known again, or reclining with closed eyes, to dream of the bright ones to come. It is a pleasing habit of mind with me to turn from the former and to indulge in the latter. Rolling years need not rub from the mind hopeful views of the future. Age and experience should only teach us to paint the future with a mellower and more truthful hue, and of course, as truth is

A Personality

ever more beautiful and lovely than fiction, it will not only be more pleasant to contemplate such a picture, but it will give a more healthy and vigorous hope and a surer trust. If the lively, trusting, hoping qualities of man's nature are properly cultivated, they need not fade and perish with time, but will be strengthened.

Since the Supreme Court commenced its sessions I have been so constantly absorbed with the law as to be almost entirely withdrawn from the world. I know but little of what is going on just around me, and less of what is being done far off. Occasionally I glance at the Louisville papers; Kentucky seems to know less than a blind puppy that has the sense to find the mother's teat and not to wound it. Kentucky hangs to the teat, but with the fierceness of a tiger growls and scratches all the time. Fortunately, she cuts herself; trying, in her madness, to injure the General Government, she is making ugly sores upon her own body, and future history will not let the scar disappear. I blush for her record in history. And I expect to see the very men who are now behaving so queerly making excuses for her. When the Supreme Court took the ordinary proceedings upon the occasion of the death of Chief Justice Taney, the Honorable R. Johnson, who had argued the Dred Scott case, seized the occasion to make an apology for the opinion which the late Chief Justice had delivered.

James Speed

It was a curious scene. Such a revolution in so short a time looks like a miracle. Kentucky is more unbelieving than Thomas. She has had her hand in the death wound of the monster slavery, the last desperate struggles of the hideous creature have been upon her soil, and yet she is unbelieving. Poor Kentucky! And yet I love her. As my native State I am proud of her. Not of her great sins and greater wrongs, but of her past history and of her still brighter future. She can not die; she is immortal, and will slough off the putrid carcass of slavery, and in my mind's eye I see her robed in all the brightness and vigor of that coming time, and love her as she is to be.

Washington, December 31, 1865.

Dear Mother:

This is the last Sunday in the year; if obedient to your precepts and practice, I would run over the things done wrong and the duties omitted, that I might be better able in the coming year to do more and fail less. I am so situated, however, that pressing duties of the hour are of such moment to the future that I have but little time and little inclination to turn my eyes backward. "Let the dead bury the dead." Great questions and great events of great moment to the country and to mankind and with the shaping of which I have more or less to do, so crowd upon one another that

A Personality

there is no time for stately and solemn funerals over the dead past. On we must go, and it would be as silly to go forward in the dark with the lantern behind as to be thinking and dreaming of the past just now. Then "let the dead bury the dead." I am in for the new year and nerved to the work it brings and ever hopeful that an honest and intelligent discharge of duty will, under God, yield pleasant and healthful fruit.

I am to-day full of vigor in mind and body. I trust that the new year will find you as I am in health to-day.

James Speed

CHAPTER VI.

1866

IN 1866 every official in Washington was pressed to his limit not alone with labor, but with the discontent and acrimony of reconstruction days. The President and his cabinet, the President and both houses of Congress were largely at cross purposes. Of course, every history is full of details concerning this period which culminated in the impeachment and trial of President Johnson, so nothing need be said other than that James Speed let very little of the feeling which was rampant in those days creep into his letters to his mother.

Washington, February 11, 1866.

Dear Mother:

I have other invitations to dinner on my table. They will be declined. I am now so deeply in debt that I fear both for my wife and purse in

A Personality

making payment. Payment must be made, however, as far as her health and honesty will permit. Good breeding and common honesty are never in conflict.

Washington, February 18, 1866.

Dear Mother:

In an occasion like this, when the vitally important and great principles upon which society is organized, are being discussed, when parties are forming as to the truth or falsity of those principles, and when the individual love of place, of power and of personal ambition and personal prejudice come in to disturb the judgment and stimulate passion, a good deal of excitement must be expected. Just now there is much excitement both here and throughout the country. It is awed, however, into quiet and a becoming demeanor, by reason of the greater trouble through which we have just past, or rather from which we are just emerging. All parties and all shades of all parties desire to have our troubles forever settled. What will bring about such a permanent settlement is the question. Upon this there is a decided and wide difference of opinion. No harm can possibly come of this difference if the contestants will continue to debate it. Let all men have a fair and open field for free thought and free speech throughout the land and the man who has not faith in the ultimate and eternal triumph of truth is an infidel.

James Speed

Whilst there is much occasion for concern in the present aspect of affairs, so much that all good men should act up to their convictions with courage and energy, there is much to rejoice over and be thankful for.

First, the number of sane men, either North or South, who regret the destruction of slavery, is so small that it gives concern to nobody.

Second, the promptness with which the whole seceded States have surrendered slavery proves that there was deep down in the breast of almost every man an unexpressed conviction that slavery was wrong. Many have declared it to be good because they could not see how to rid themselves of it. It has been destroyed; the price of opinion and lifelong prejudices prevent them from denouncing it as a sin and a wrong; they will and do say that the institution must not be restored. A little more time and a little more self-searching will efface or revise their former convictions.

The mind naturally loves that which is good more than that which is evil, loves truth and justice more than falsehood and error. Often it is troubled and perplexed to find out what is good and what not, to separate the truth from falsehood, justice from error. The history of all the religions of the world and the lives of martyrs teach us that the above remark is true. Men have died ignominious

A Personality

and cruel deaths for the sake of gross and foul errors, and since, because they honestly believed in their justice and truth. The fidelity and courage of a martyr does not prove the truth of his belief, but attests the honesty and sincerity of his convictions.

The South had many martyrs to the cause of slavery—men who freely pledged and gave their lives to prove that slavery was of divine origin—and yet, ere the sod has grown over their graves, their surviving companions reject the testimony, and by their conduct, which speaks louder than words, declare that it is an evil and rejoice in its destruction. Such a change is wonderful—almost a miracle. There is nothing like it in the history of the past. Let us clap our hands and rejoice exceedingly. With such a wonder from the recent past staring us full in the face, can we be downcast because of the shadows and light clouds that hang over our path? Robing ourselves in the remembrance of the glorious brightness of the past, let us move on, and the shadows and clouds that alarm those who are weak in hope and faith will disappear.

The time was when in my shortsightedness I thought that God had cast my lot in evil times. I do not think so now. It is good to have lived in these times and with the men of this age. The common people have been the heroes of the times, and the sentiment of the common people has

James Speed

achieved a triumph which, it is hoped, will be perpetual. To go down to an undistinguished grave from such times and from against such men is greatly more to be desired than to have an ever enduring monument, for effort and courage wasted to establish wrong.

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On reading over this letter, I find it full of commonplace sentiments, but these commonplace sentiments ought to be called up frequently and then made to give assistance in meeting the trials of life. The best preachers rarely say anything new—indeed, I may say never—and yet, preaching is of singular service, inasmuch as it calls to mind the moral rules upon which rest the practical ethics of life. It is like agitating water to keep it from stagnating and becoming foul.

Washington, February 25, 1866.

Dear Mother:

Last Sunday I wrote to you jubilant; to-day I am still full of trust, hope, and confidence in the final triumph of truth and equal justice; troubles and difficulties that I did not anticipate are upon us. A storm of acrimony and bitterness seems to be brewing. The people have steered, worked, and saved the Ship of State through times and seasons of greater peril. They will do so again.



ENLARGED FROM BRADY PICTURE OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN
AND CABINET

A Personality

The people saved a periled government and nationality; they can and they will reconstruct and preserve that for which they sacrificed so much blood and treasure.

It seems to me that the most difficult lesson for the would-be great men of this age to learn and understand is that the age of hero-worship is past. Intelligence has become so general and so elevated that no man of this age is like Saul, "head and shoulders taller than the rest." Leadership now and forever hereafter must be a different thing and requiring a different temperament and talents from those heretofore exhibited by great leaders. To accomplish present and lasting good a man must not only believe that he is right, but must be right. The calm and collected wisdom of this intelligent people is greater than that of any one man. Still each individual man must diligently seek to find out what is right and fearlessly pursue it. Truth is born of a full and fearless comparison and conflict of opinion. The man who would find the truth must make up his mind for the comparison and conflict. Without such comparison and conflict he can never be sure that he is right. For the sake of the right and for himself he must go into it as cheerfully as a well trained soldier into battle.

Be not downcast or gloomy because this day is dark. I think I see when and how the storm might have been avoided, but the opportunity is long

James Speed

gone and can not now be recalled. We have lived through much gloomier times and days, and since then have seen many bright ones. So will it be again.

The courage and steady purpose of this people have been tried and proved on a thousand battle-fields; now their fidelity to truth and justice must be tried and proved. This is a contest of a much higher order. The war has prepared men for it; it has quickened their intellects, enlarged their views, given them practiced courage, self-reliance, and individuality. A people trained in such a school and with so much at stake of interest and of horror are not going to falter.

Washington, March 25, 1866.

Dear Mother:

Having had to write an opinion this morning for the Secretary of State, I have but little time to say much to you. If at home it would have been one of the Sunday mornings on which I could not make my dutiful bow.

Things look misty and dark, and yet with the eye of hope and faith I can see through the clouds cheering rays. Present ills are ever the hardest to bear. I have a boil on the calf of my right leg; I have had many much worse, and yet the one I now have annoys and hurts me worse than the memory

A Personality

I have heretofore had. It does not follow because I fret and complain of the one I now have and forget those of the past, that it is more dangerous than others. It is kind in Nature to make me oblivious of past suffering; it is equally kind in Nature to make me think of the present sore as I will be thus induced to apply the appropriate remedy. It is in the moral and political world as in the physical—pains and aches are calls for remedies. The excited and roused intellects of this country are all seeking earnestly and honestly to find the appropriate remedy and it will be done.

For a time we may be in a mist and fog. So we were at the breaking out of the Rebellion. Clear in mind and pure in purpose, the people of this country will, after a while, find the true path, just as they did when called to meet so gigantic a rebellion. My boil frets me and yet the chances are as one thousand to one that it will get well. The vigorous strength and health of this people will slough off the present ills, as my body will the present matter that causes me such sore pain. Then be of good cheer.

If James Speed did not write to his mother concerning the growing breach between the President and himself, he must have written fully to his boyhood chum and lifelong confidant,

James Speed

his brother Joshua. In the two following letters, written March 27 and April 1 by Joshua Speed in Louisville, it is very evident that James Speed had written him at length concerning the position in which he found himself with opinions and convictions that he could not give up and which were evidently at variance with those of the President.

Louisville, March 27, 1866.

Dear James:

With regard to your second letter which I shall of course regard as strictly confidential, I have felt for some time that your position was a delicate one. Of course, you can not and will not change your opinions or convictions to hold peace. Yet at the same time, so long as the President holding different opinions and very widely different convictions, does not make it a cause of difference. Is it not a good reason why *you* should yourself bring about a breach?

It occurs to me that on the high points of honor you can not take any other course, so long as all your official and personal relations with the President are such as you would have them.

JOSHUA SPEED.

A Personality

Louisville, April 1, 1866.

Dear James:

As to your own course under the circumstances which surround you, I have to say that personally it would be to your interest to return. But there are other considerations other than mere personal interest, which should have much weight with you.

You were appointed by the late President, as a representative man of the party for freedom in the slave States. The country and the party are both satisfied with the appointment. It would grieve those with whose political fortunes your political destiny is linked, for you to quit. While what is still worse, it would gladden the hearts of your enemies. So long as you can with honor, which I know you will never sacrifice, I would advise you to remain; when that can not be done, I know you will quit.

My own theory is that no one can now stop the progress of ideas for freedom which have taken so deep a hold upon the public mind. Mr. Johnson and his whole Cabinet may be a unit to check it, but the wheels of progress will as surely run over them as that they place themselves in its way. The tendency of the world now is upward and onward, and it will continue.

So from the decline and fall of the Roman Empire to the Dark Ages, it was impossible to check its downward tendency.

James Speed

Public sentiment is as unstable as the current of the Mississippi. It has treacherous banks, shoals, and shifting bottoms, but still its course is onward to the Gulf. Our political ideas will also reach the gulf of human freedom, in spite of all the impediments that man may place in its way.

JOSHUA SPEED,

Washington, April 22, 1866.

Dear Mother:

I am hungry beyond description for a plain, face-to-face talk with some independent, free-thinking friends. I want to see some people who are not in official harness or under the shadow of official influence.

It is wonderful to witness the struggle that is going on to keep place and power by disgusting egotism, or a still more disgusting subserviency. Nearly every man I see here either wants to keep the place he has, or is seeking to get the place of some one else. Shut out from contact and intercourse with the independent, honest-thinking mass, and which is, after all, the great and ruling majority, the office-holder is in great danger of learning to put a low estimate upon human nature. I would avoid that habit of mind, and to do so must for a time get from under Washington influences.

A Personality

Washington, June 10, 1866.

Dear Mother:

A week has gone since I wrote to you and how rapidly! The time has come with me that I can say from actual experience, that man's life is but a span. The days are short, weeks are short, months and years are short, and the sum of all in human life is short. But short as our days, months, and years are, how tedious and weary they would be if not filled with effort. Sancho Panza blessed sleep; so do I, but work is the parent of sleep. Let us then thank God for placing us under the necessity for work. I saw some jovial Italians on a frolic in Louisville; they met a bull in the street; one of the party, a fine looking man, took off his hat with gravity and made a most respectful bow to the bull; one of his companions said, "Why are you so polite to that animal?" The bowing gentleman replied, "Because he is the father of the cheese." So I reverence work because it is the father of success and of refreshing sleep. We work to sleep, and sleep that we may work again.

No letters of James Speed to his brother Joshua can be found that touch upon the widening breach between him and the President. That such letters were written can be seen in two letters of Joshua dated July 3rd and 10th.

James Speed

Louisville, July 3, 1866.

Dear James:

I am gratified to learn that you will not go with the Philadelphia Convention. No one need fear it. It will die before it is born. There will be but two great parties in this country. One the Union Party composed of men devoted to the integrity of the Government, willing to do anything to perpetuate it, as they have done everything to save it. Like all great parties it will have bad men occasionally taking the lead, playing upon the almost idolatrous worship of the Union among the masses for their own selfish ends.

The other is an equally earnest party, sectional in its character and in its organization, honestly believing in the right of the Scripture, changing their tactics to suit the changed circumstances surrounding them. They will again struggle for power.

The honest men in the Union Party, devoted to the great truths in the Declaration of Independence as interpreted by Mr. Lincoln in his Gettysburg speech, will come before the people asking that those great truths be reflected in all the action both of the State and National governments.

The other party, acting upon a prejudice honest and sincere, will seek to have their prejudices reflected in all the action of the Government.

Two such parties have never met before. All third parties will sink into insignificance beside

A Personality

them. And the contest will go on till one or the other shall triumph. You had as well talk of a water mill upon a dry view stream as of a third party based upon side issues.

JOSHUA SPEED.

Louisville, July 10, 1866.

Dear James:

. . . As to your own action in the event of the President becoming a candidate for re-election upon a platform which you can not approve. It may come to you in so many different phases that no human being can now advise you as to what should be your action. It is best to wait the issue of events and meet them as they arise.

JOSHUA SPEED.

Washington, July 13, 1866.

Dear Joshua:

Yesterday I had a full and frank talk with the President, the result of which was that I am to resign. I would have done so at once, but preferred to give him a day or two to look around for my successor. I will see him again to-morrow or the next day, or as this is Cabinet day, he may approach me upon the subject to-day. When you and I meet, I will of course give you a full and detailed account of my interview with the President. Now, I will content myself with saying, it was as

James Speed

kind and courteous on his side as I could ask, and I do not think he got the advantage of me in that particular. His personal and official conduct toward me has ever been so unexceptionable that I could not think of sending a cold and formal resignation without a previous personal interview. It is an axiom with me that a man should never permit the arts of a politician to control the instincts of a gentleman. I took my own course in regard to the matter, without suggestion or aid from any one. Many of my political friends think that I have erred—that I should have sent him a plump and direct resignation. After the most mature reflection I thought otherwise, and have acted otherwise, and I feel that I have done it in the manner a gentleman should; and I don't care a fig whether politicians approve or disapprove the manner of the thing. So you may confidently look for me very soon.

Washington, July 15, 1866.

Dear Mother:

Before this reaches you, you will have seen that I have resigned my office. This, I take it for granted, you have been expecting. I am not of those who would prate about the sweets of private life as compared with the labors, cares, and anxieties of office. So long as I could with self-respect, I have been willing to hold office, believing and

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hoping that in place I could be of service to my country and to mankind. My health and strength have been sufficient for the labors and cares of office. The duties of office, or the office that I have held, have been consonant to my taste. My resignation, therefore, rests exclusively on political grounds. The President does not favor the proposed constitutional amendment—I do; the President favors the new organization which it is proposed to baptize at Philadelphia on the fourteenth of August next, and I do not. So differing, though our personal relations have been and are kind and friendly, it became a necessity that I should either remain in the Cabinet tongue-tied, or go out and be a freeman. I could not hesitate. I rank the duties and rights of a man and a citizen above those of a politician and office-holder.

There will appear in the papers on to-morrow or the next day, a letter from me to Senator Doolittle. In that letter you will see the real ground upon which I thought it my duty to resign.

To the President:

Sir:

I herewith resign to you the office of Attorney-General of the United States. Be good enough, sir, to accept my thanks for the kindness, consideration and confidence you have always shown me. I have the honor to be, sir, your most obedient,

JAMES SPEED.

James Speed

NEW YORK HERALD, *Tuesday, July 17, 1866.*

EX-ATTORNEY-GENERAL SPEED ON THE
NATIONAL UNION CONVENTION.

Washington, D. C., July 14, 1866.

To Honorable J. R. Doolittle, *Chairman, etc.*:

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your note of the 10th inst., with a printed copy of a call for a National Union Convention to be held in Philadelphia on the 14th day of August next. You request, in case the call and principle enunciated in it meet my approval, that I reply at my earliest convenience. This language would seem to imply that no answer is desired if I do not approve the call and the principle avowed in it; in other words, that a failure to reply may be interpreted as a disapproval not only of the call but of each and all of the principles announced in it. This is a position in which I am unwilling to be placed, when I approve of many of the principles set forth in the call, and yet do not approve of the call itself.

I will briefly state my reasons, first premising that I do not recognize the very respectable gentlemen who have made this call as the acknowledged organs of the great Union Party of the country. Since the outbreak of the terrific struggle from which the country has now emerged, we have had a National Union Party that has exhibited

A Personality

more devotion, made greater sacrifices, and manifested more unselfish patriotism than any party ever did previously in the history of the world. That party is still in being, with its organization intact and its organs known; and as that party, by its faith, its doctrines, and exertions, has, in the face of the prophecies of half the New and all the Old World, saved the Government and the republican institutions of our common country from demoralization and indeed from utter ruin by vindicating at all hazard the primordial theory of the eternal, indissoluble union of the States, through which only can a particle of the theory of the State rights ever be maintained and carried out, it would appear to me to be still the only, or at any rate the most effectual means as far as a party can do it, for finally adjusting all the remaining minor and unsettled matters of reconstruction consistently with the requirements of the theory mentioned.

This party is the same to-day as it was in the days of its trial; the same party now as when, but a few short months ago, it elected Lincoln and Johnson and the majority of the present Congress; and as I acted with it then for paramount reasons my sense of duty demands that I remain and act with it now.

The pith and marrow of the present call, I should say, tend toward a convention to form a

James Speed

party for sustaining, not the government entire—"as has been the mission of the Union Party"—but a department of the Government; and here I must take the liberty of adding that I can hardly conceive of any sadder spectacle under the crisis of present circumstances than that of the tried Union Party of the country becoming disloyal and broken up by divisions, or that of one branch of government of the country taking an isolated position upon questions of deep and common interest and placing itself in hostile conflict with a co-ordinate department.

For these and other reasons which might be mentioned, I can not join in the call for the convention in Philadelphia. I have said that many of the principles stated in the call are in my view objectionable. I will not stop to criticise those which are objectionable, but content myself with stating that the call fails to take any notice of one of the late issues now before the American people. I allude to the question whether the several States shall ratify or reject the last amendment proposed by Congress to the Constitution of the United States. This is a grave and all-important question. The issue upon it can not be avoided. It should be placed fairly and squarely before the people. The failure to take ground upon so important and all-absorbing a question must be attributed either to a desire to avoid the issue or as a declaration

A Personality

of belief and policy against the adoption of the amendment. Being myself earnestly and decidedly in favor of the adoption of the amendment by States, I can not go into an organization that would either openly oppose that measure or that would smother it by avoiding its discussion.

I must also add that no man is more desirous than I am to attain the entire restoration of the American Union, with its practical workings in more perfect harmony and concord than ever, and the surety, as far as mortal affairs can be made sure, of endless perpetuity in the future. The blessings to flow from such a union are countless and inestimable; but such a union, consistent within itself, maintained by the universal consent of all classes and sections, and laughing to scorn both the assaults of foes internal or external, and the ravages of time and change, will only be obtained by sternly retracting every departure from or compromise with the supreme and general idea fundamental to the American Constitution. That general idea consists, in brief, of the political liberty and of the equality of mankind under the law. Such and such only can be the Union, the nationality that will put in form the magnificent and lofty dreams of the American continental mind, and fulfil in the future the highest efforts of the present and past. It is not the vague delusion that the rights of the State need doctoring.

James Speed

The American theory culminates properly in the sacredness of the rights of individuals—of each single individual. That, after all, is what Washington carved out with the sword and Jefferson, filtering it through his subtle and free mind, drew up and put on record with the pen.

It is well known that in the political and legal history of the United States, the only departures or compromises of the kind alluded to have been those in the interest of slavery and of its manifold incidents. I do not, of course, propose to go over the thousand times told tale of the past sixty years; to-day's slavery, as a confessed legality, is, as we all know, no more; but some of the most important of its incidents or compromises still remain—blots and incongruities upon the law. What equitable reason can be given why these incidents also should not be erased? "Time was that when the brains were out the man would die," but now we see the limbs demanding to live and move, as if the nervous center still existed. The persistent attempt to keep in the Constitution the rule of an unequal and unfair basis of representation is perilous to the future peace of the country, and will surely cause a chafing sense of injustice as long as it continues. Furthermore the high mission of the Union Party, as avowed in the Baltimore Convention—to extirpate slavery—includes the removal of all the hateful and anti-popular excrescences ingrafted



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by that institution for its own selfish aggrandizement upon our free national laws and policy. That high mission and obligation can not be accomplished until all which slavery has so engrafted is cut out; for until then slavery is not extirpated. Earnestly sympathizing with the men who look to a law of equal representation as the only guarantee, both for popular rights and popular acquiescence, I would feel myself out of place in a party that favors a basis of representation giving peculiar and unrighteous advantage to a portion of the body politic, to the detriment and dissatisfaction of the whole.

Uniting with you and all good men in the soul-felt desire that peace, prosperity, and that amicable brotherhood, which is more than any worldly prosperity, may soon prevail and continue unbroken through our beloved country; that former enmities shall die out and be forever lost, and that all over the broad domain of America equal laws shall protect equal rights to all mankind,

I have the honor to subscribe myself,

JAMES SPEED.

When the Republican National Convention met in Philadelphia, September 3, 1866, it was decided after the opening of the preliminaries to divide the organization into a Northern and

James Speed

Southern convention. This was done that the Southern men present might talk over the peculiar problems of the South without any hindrance from their Northern friends. James Speed was made Permanent Chairman of the Southern Convention.

On taking the chair as the Permanent President of this Convention, Mr. Speed spoke of the Administration, of which he had been a member until the middle of the previous July. In describing the Convention in Philadelphia, August 14th, as one with which "we could not act," he said in part:

Why was that convention here? It was here in part because the great cry came up from the white man of the South, "My constitutional rights are denied me"; then the cry came up from the black man of the South, "My constitutional rights are denied me." These complaints are utterly antagonistic, the one to the other; and this convention is called to say which is right. Upon that question, if upon none other, as Southern men you must speak out your mind. Speak the truth

A Personality

as you feel it, speak the truth as you know it, speak the truth as you love permanent peace, as you may hope to establish the institutions of this Government so that our children and our children's children shall enjoy a peace that we have not known. . . . The convention to which I have referred, as I read its history, came here to simply record in abject submission the commands of one man. The convention did his commands. The loyal Congress of the United States had refused to do his commands; and whenever you have a Congress that does not resolutely and firmly refuse, as the present Congress has done, to merely act as the recording secretary of the tyrant at the White House, American liberty is gone forever.

A sensation was created throughout the North and the South by this frank statement of Mr. Speed's position. It was not only because of what he said but because of his having been close to the President and his cabinet just two months before and because he was a Southern man born and bred. It stimulated a strong sentiment for fair play among the Northern and Southern Republicans of that period.

James Speed

CHAPTER VII.

1865—1868

THE general public very rarely knows any leader, for it must of necessity see only his outer self. The real inner man, the alive, loving personality is rarely seen outside of the man's own home circle or is only revealed in his conversation and correspondence with his wife, his children, or his intimate friends. A man to be truly great must be a success both in private and in public life. He must love with his whole soul and being some woman who has made his hearthstone radiant with her personality.

Deep down in an old packing-box of receipts and legal documents, which had been stored for years in an attic, a small bundle of faded letters was found quite lately. How this particular bundle of letters chanced to be saved among an

A Personality

assortment of office rubbish is not known. The letters, however, are an invaluable part of the records which James Speed left behind him. They give a glimpse of his personality from a new viewpoint, a viewpoint which he allowed his wife to have. All of these letters were written while on an extended Eastern trip in search of relief from a prolonged attack of some peculiar blood trouble. That he enjoyed, thoroughly enjoyed, these "paper talks" with his wife is very evident, for at times two complete letters will bear a heading showing that they were written the same day. In going over them they showed that one of them had been written each day; all of them were four pages of rather closely-written note paper, some much longer, and a few of them covered nineteen pages. Clippings have been made from these letters here and there that the reader may get a clear-cut conception of the man's opinions and emotions as he viewed the passing throngs,

James Speed

the sky, the ocean, the beach, and the entire makeup of life at a seaside resort.

The first three of these letters were written from Washington, where he had evidently stopped over for some business. The later ones were from Cape May, where he had stayed from the middle until the latter part of July in the year 1867. Fortunately these letters largely tell their own story.

Washington, July 10, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . I was in the Lower House and witnessed the debate and vote on the supplementary reconstruction act. The Democrats had no show. They seemed to me to be preparing for a graceful death. Plainly do they see that the measures of Congress will destroy their party. The Democrats seem to me to be acting most blindly in this.

My visit here has satisfied me that it is well reconstruction has been retarded. I would have gone a little too fast. I do not mean by that that I would have gone further than Congress is now doing, but that I would have gone to the point Congress will now reach before the people were ready for such an advanced step—now they are ready and anxious.

A Personality

Washington, July 11, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . Words can hardly make you understand the cordial manner of the President. We will talk the matter over when I get home.

Washington, July 12, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . You say that you want me to write you all the gossip. Now you well know that is not my style. When cosily seated I can talk it, but I can not get over the feeling that to sit down and make a record of it looks malicious. I am too good-natured to indulge in any such malice. When I get home I can and will tell you much that I will not write, because some of it would look like egotism and the remainder wicked. As I am neither an egotist nor a wicked man, and you lovingly agreed to take and keep me, I beg of you to bear with my seeming taciturnity. I have no inclination at all to talk of myself in writing to you, but do feel all the time like talking of you. From a full heart the mouth speaketh and so my letters would be all about my Jenny, and why and how I love her, if I did not know your habit of passing my letters around. The theme would be to me the most agreeable of all and might be pleasing to you, but how senseless and dull to others.

James Speed

Cape May, July 13, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . On the road from Philadelphia I found the swamp magnolia and woodbine in full bloom and the flowers generally that are gathered so eagerly around Washington. I was disappointed on nearing this place to see none within striking distance, having resolved on the road to gather every day a bunch and have them on my table as memorials of many a happy hour with you.

Cape May, July 14, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . I have not seen since I left home either a pretty or an interesting face. Let me beg the pardon of a little woman who came on the cars from Philadelphia. She sat on the opposite seat alone. My attention was attracted to her by a restlessness that was barely perceptible. Her face was far from pretty or interesting as she sat alone. As we approached a station about twenty miles from here her restlessness increased. She peeped out of the windows anxiously. The cars passed the platform on which stood a fine looking young man looking eagerly into each car. She saw him and he did not see her. The car soon stopped and we were going back rapidly to the platform; again we passed the gentleman who was looking in more anxiously than before. Again he failed to see her;

A Personality

she could stand it no longer; as quick as thought she was on the platform, having leaped when the cars were going quite fast. She got a hard fall, but was up in a moment and by the side of her loved husband. Soon they came and were seated together. His presence brought the soul of love into her face and then she was beautiful. The transformation was wonderful. Strange to say, eyes that before were dull became bright as diamonds, lips that had been colorless became red as cherries, moist with dew, and teeth that were unobserved before were found to be pearl-like and evenly set. Yes, I must beg that young woman's pardon. Love made her both beautiful and interesting. Her husband was very handsome, and if I had not seen her looking into his face and listening to the tones of his voice, I should have said that it was impossible for him to fall in love with her. In his presence Apollo would have paused to gaze at her respectfully.

Cape May, July 16, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . I have been looking at the ladies' dresses in order to describe them or some of them. No particular color seems to be in fashion. Every color and every shade of color is worn. The shape and finish of the dresses and head-gear are as various as the colors. In one particular most of the

James Speed

dresses are alike. The breadth of the skirt and consequently the size of the hoop are much reduced; what has been taken from the breadth of the skirt has been added to the train. Their trains are prodigiously long. I noticed too that in the trimmings the apparel is not as expensive as it was. A few years ago buttons and shoulder straps were much worn by the ladies. The military fever induced that fashion. Shoulder straps are now dispensed with, and beads have been substituted for buttons. I speak of the dressing as I see it on the beach, lawn, and porch. I have been to no hop and can not therefore speak of the ball dresses.

.
I walked this morning to that point on the beach where the retiring waves make in the sand the most beautiful carpet I ever saw; the figures are various, one running into another with exquisite grace, and of divers colors. Looking at the arched sky, the boldly indented beach, and the unusual lines in this carpeting, I could but see how Nature is ever graceful and how she abhors straight lines and sharp angles. Occasionally you may find a sharp angle—never yet have I found her to make a direct line. I am grateful to a kind Providence for increasing my love and admiration of the beautiful and grand in Nature as age creeps on me. To me all of Nature's works are comely—never offensive.

A Personality

Cape May, July 16, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . You ask me for a description of the women, their dresses. Of their personal appearance I can say nothing agreeable. They seem to be aware that neither the "jeweler's polish nor the silkworm's art" can relieve them from the pains and penalties incident to a judgment of homeliness, and so they attire themselves plainly. Their feminine and modest behavior, however, more than compensates for their ugliness—it beggars all praise. Armed with pure hearts and cultivated minds, they can dispense with the strategy of *breastworks* and dress. Speaking of strategy, when fishing yesterday I talked much with the fisherman, an unlettered but observant man, especially observant of the habits of fishes and birds. Seeing some fish hawks engaged at their vocation and hearing one utter a distressing scream, the fisherman said that it saw an eagle; the hawk had a fish in its claws. The eagle rarely interferes with the hawk, except to rob it of its prey. The hawk is to the eagle what the jackal is to the lion. The fisherman said that he had often seen the hawk, after catching and killing a fish, seize a bone and make off with it; the eagle mistaking the bone for a fish would soon be after the hawk. Getting as far away from the dead fish as possible, and when the eagle was excited and eager, the hawk would drop the bone,

James Speed

which the eagle would follow; the hawk having thus outwitted his powerful enemy, would return and bear off his dead fish in safety. Strategy, whether exhibited by a general or woman, is an art common to all animated nature.

Cape May, July 19, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . A few doors from me there is a sick baby—it has the summer complaint. I can hear its sad moan. It is all the time with its nurse. The mother is now downstairs flashily dressed and with the dancers. Why does God give such precious gifts to so thoughtless and unfeeling people? They at least serve one good purpose—they teach all thoughtful men whose wives are kind and watchful mothers to appreciate them. Its wail is so piteous that, man though I am, I am tempted to go and see what I can do for it. If you were here I know you would.

Cape May, July 20, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . What a sovereign over all of us habit is. Some of the girls begin to look pretty. They looked fresh and rosy after old ocean had been toying with and kissing their cheeks.

Not a sound from the sick baby. I hope it is

A Personality

better. Yes, I now hear it, and I am glad to say its voice is playful. So it must be better. Yes, it is better for I hear its voice again and again ringing merrily.

July 21, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

I was again on the beach before breakfast. There were many walkers out. All seemed to be hunting diamonds, unconscious of the beautifully carpeted sand, the rolling ocean, bearing upon its bosom a countless number of vessels in sight, the deep blue vaulted sky, and the fresh breeze. Let them hunt on; most of them are doomed to disappointment. One may chance to find a jewel, whilst I, and such as I, find priceless treasures on the earth, in the sea, in the sky, and in every breath of air.

To-day is a grand one at Cape May for the church-goers. The Methodists with Bishop Limson to lead them are here in force to dedicate a new church. The Episcopalians, too, have some such ceremony. Mr. Neill, to whom I was introduced yesterday, preaches the sermon for the Methodists. I feel that I ought to pay him the compliment to hear him, and yet Venus, born of old Ocean's spray, still lingers there and woos enchantingly. The conflict is betwixt the ocean's spray and the preacher—sufficient for the hour is the evil thereof—I will decide when the hour comes.

James Speed

The men and women have on their Sunday dresses and Sabbath faces, looking plain and demure. How silly! If God had ordered such a change that day would have been distinguished from other days by a sombre aspect. Let us rest this day, but with cheerful and merry hearts, innocent and health-giving pleasures should be the orizons and vespers of the Sundays. Then would it be the Sabbath made for man.

I am ashamed of the length of this letter, as I have been of all of my late ones. The truth is you are mixed up in all of my thoughts, let them be bright or, as they usually are, commonplace, and so I must write them, and you may read or not as the leisure or inclination permits.

Cape May, July 28, 1867.

My Dear Wife:

. . . Yesterday evening the ocean was magnificent. A strong breeze from the South made white caps over the wide expanse as far as the eye could reach and rolled up the waves high on the beach in rapid succession. From dinner time till dark with my bachelor friend, I was, except at short intervals, all the time on the beach. Having called his attention to the beautiful tracings on the sand made by the retreating tide, he is ever

A Personality

to be found with the sand pipers, little birds that feed on the margin of an ebbing tide.

Fortunately it is again possible to quote a couple of entries from his wife's diary, which had been discontinued for two years and again picked up for two or three days in 1868.

February 15, 1868.

After more than two years again this poor neglected diary is opened, more as a means of arriving at a past date than with any thought of recommencing a daily entry. Had I continued noting events from the Spring of 1863 how much valuable matter would have been saved for our children relative to the great Civil War of our country. They were cognizant of as much as I was—still, much will pass from the memories of our younger children unless recalled in some such form. Histories will be written but time must pass ere that can be done to much purpose, and will be read by their children with more interest, just as they read and enjoy the events of our War for Independence.

Mr. Speed was Attorney-General and we were living in Washington, D. C., when last I wrote in this diary. He did not remain in Mr. Johnson's Cabinet but sixteen months; had Mr. Lincoln lived

James Speed

we would in all probability have still been there, but from many causes Mr. Speed decided to resign and return to his old home and profession. This he did in July, 1866. We had no home to return to; our house in town and place in the country were both sold before I joined him with the children, in a home he had prepared for us in Washington. We accepted an invitation from Joshua to stay with them until we could make arrangements. . . . In the meantime Mr. Speed bought Joshua Speed's house and twenty acres of land. . . . Times are hard, the season has been cold, with much snow, coal scarce and high, little or no work to be had; consequently, much suffering among the working classes. God in His mercy grant that a change may soon occur or there may be trouble in store for us such as they sometimes have across the ocean in England and France.



FROM OIL PAINTING BY BENONI IRWIN

A Personality

CHAPTER VIII.

1867—1887.

THE country home which James Speed purchased from his brother Joshua was disposed of in a few years, and he moved to a larger tract of land a few miles from Louisville, which he called "The Poplars." Here he lived a peculiarly ideal life. Each morning he drove into the city to a law practice, which had become very lucrative, and each afternoon, went home to a quiet life in close touch with the great out-of-doors, which had meant so much to him throughout his life. It was a great delight to visit him in this country home of his, where he was surrounded by his family, his large library, and forty exquisitely fertile acres, the major part of which was in rolling blue grass, dotted with magnificent forest trees.

Here too, on summer afternoons, or during

James Speed

the long winter evenings, a number of law students would gather about him to discuss law points. There had always been a strange pleasure for him in pitting his mind against those of the young men who attended the Louisville Law School, of which he was one of the faculty. In fact it was not an uncommon thing for him to bring into his own home some impetuous young law student who really needed an outing and could not afford it. To these he gave the best bedroom in the house and all the courtesy and attention which a distinguished guest might expect. His success as a teacher of law was not alone due to this delight which he took in associating with younger men, but was also due to the fact that his patience and temper were under absolute control. He never seemed to lose his head no matter what happened.

The many extracts from his letters and writings, which are used in this little memoir, show a decided flavor of the older literature.

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This peculiar flavor grew out of the books which he loved and read most. He would read "Plutarch's Lives" and "Plutarch's Morals" by the hour, and well-worn copies of Shakespeare, Bobbie Burns, and the Old Testament were always close enough for him to reach them easily. He read these over and over and was particularly fond of reading aloud passages which struck him as especially strong. His fondness for Cervantes' "Don Quixote" was pronounced, and frequently, when reading the volume, he would laugh until his spectacles became so clouded that he had to wipe them in order that he might continue the pleasure.

Occasionally during these years, when spring came from the South with her tender green veiling, with the soft noises which murmur through the woods, and with the laughter which gets into the throat of every brook and stream, he would get down his fishing tackle, look it over carefully, and drive with some congenial

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friends to nearby streams for a day in quest of black bass. But at that time the streams in Kentucky were beginning to lose their finny inhabitants, and so he frequently traveled to the Northern lakes to enjoy several weeks of his favorite sport. He became a member of a select group of men who had organized a fishing club. One young man, who had joined the club, came back to Louisville complaining bitterly of the ironclad rules which James Speed, as president of the club, enforced. He told his friends that on the second day at camp he and the president had been out in the lake where the fishing was at its best. As he expressed it, "We were catching them just about as fast as we could take them off the hook, rebait, and throw out again. We hadn't been out more than about a half an hour, when I was surprised to see Mr. Speed quietly reeling in his line, while he counted the fish that had been caught. He touched me on the shoulder and told me that it

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was time to quit. When I protested that I wasn't near ready to quit, he remarked very quietly but very positively, 'A real sportsman never catches more fish nor kills more game than he and his party can eat. Do you believe that our party can eat any more fish than we have now?' I looked at the fish, knew he was right, and he took me back."

As one writes of this country place, "The Poplars," delightful pictures throng the mind—pictures of a house painted white, with big green shutters, with a wide hospitable porch, whose roof was held in place by huge, snowy columns, and of new tanbark walks in spring, with their strange, pungent, fresh odor; but more vivid than any other picture is that of an old gentleman in morning slippers walking out between the lilac bushes that were heavy with dew and vibrant with the songs of the nesting cat birds. Then the figure turns down a sidewalk which leads by old-fashioned flower beds, a riot of

James Speed

pink and white and deep red roses, cautiously the slippered feet move in and out among the rose bushes, so that the man's hand may reach some especially beautiful bud that is still flashing the colors of the rainbow from the dew-drops that tremble on its petals. He gathers the roses and walks slowly back that he may arrange them into small bouquets on a big table on the huge old back porch. Into the dining-room the figure moves, with both hands full of small nosegays, that each woman in the family may have this bit of his love on her plate to greet her when she comes to breakfast. After each plate has its especial nosegay, the hand which had gathered them all so carefully places a single red bud in the lapel of his own coat. This is all done so quietly, with such a soft light in his face, that it seems almost a part of a morning prayer.

During spring, summer, and autumn, Sunday was always guest day at "The Poplars."

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Neighbors dropped in from the country about; many friends and relatives from Louisville drove out without any invitation; they spent the day under the shade of the trees in the big front yard, and they took dinner in true Southern style. Every Saturday James Speed selected with the utmost care an enormous roast of beef so that no matter who might happen to drop in for dinner, there would be ample on the table for every one of his guests. Indeed, it was not at all an uncommon thing for fifteen or twenty friends and relatives to face each other about his hospitable Sunday board.

It was on one of these Sundays when a number of relatives and friends had been spending the week-end at "The Poplars" that an incident happened which shows very clearly James Speed's peculiar and broad religious attitude. A number of his guests were making their preparations to go to the various churches in town, while their host was seated under a

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wide-spreading maple in the front yard. As the various members of the house-party came by him on their way to the front gate, each asked him if he were going to church, and to each he replied, "Why, yes, of course I'm going to church. This is Sunday."

After dinner, when the whole party was seated under the shade of the old tree, a lively fusillade of talk was begun concerning the sermons heard, the people met at church, and the costumes they happened to wear. For some time a quiet, amused smile touched the corners of the old gentleman's eyes, and he appeared to be waiting for some questions which he felt sure would be asked. At length one of the party turned to him and said:

"By the way, which one of the churches did you go to after all, and what sort of a sermon did you hear, and how were the folks dressed?"

His smile broadened until it lighted his whole face, and then he said:



"BIG ROCK"

BEAR GRASS CREEK, CHEROKEE PARK

A Personality

"Why, I went to the oldest church of them all to-day," and then he paused.

"Which one was that," some one asked, "the Jewish or the Catholic Church?"

Again the smile flitted about his eyes, as he answered:

"I spent the whole of the morning on Bear-grass Creek at Big Rock, and I was the only man in the congregation. The sermon was not spoken in words, it was merely felt; but the church in which I sat had a wonderful ceiling that was an intricate mosaic of delicate green, with small splashes of pale blue showing through, and floating down the long, dim corridors that were carpeted with the softest green, came the voices of the choristers. It wasn't a trained chorus, but in some way all of the voices of the feathered songsters seemed to blend wonderfully with the sounds that came from the leaves and with the hoarse undercurrent of melody that came from the water, as it rushed over the stones above Big Rock.

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"There was one very noticeable feature in this church in which I worshipped, and that was the fashions. The fashions were as old as old Mother Nature herself, and although some of the colors worn were gaudy, yet there was a harmony about them that was wonderfully pleasing. To tell you the truth, the costumes made so little impression on me that I didn't think of them a second time."

Again there was a short pause, in which the quiet smile wrinkled the corners of his eyes, and then he continued:

"I only wish that all of the churches to which you good folks went this morning had been as free from the dictates of Dame Fashion as mine was."

Although James Speed had served his State and his country in many offices and been intensely interested in the political world, still he never seemed to become anything of a politician. During the latter part of his life his

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interest in politics continued, but he was never willing to accept any office, but gave himself up to his practice, his family, and his friends.

Two years before his death his wife passed away very suddenly and it seemed as if it were impossible for him to get possession of his real self again. He was never really sick, but it was noticeable that he was failing slowly and steadily. Only two months before his death he was a speaker at a meeting of the Society of the Loyal Legion at Cincinnati, Ohio. Although he was quite feeble at the time he answered the toast, "Abraham Lincoln." During his brief, but impressive address, the more than three hundred members present were as still as death, except for sudden and spontaneous applause, which followed many of his sentences. This address is so entirely typical of the man and shows so clearly his love for Mr. Lincoln that it is here given in full:

James Speed

JAMES SPEED'S ADDRESS.

Less than two years after the death of Mr. Lincoln I gave a brief expression of my appreciation of his character. Then it was too soon for a general reception of his great and good qualities.

I then said, "When passion shall have subsided, and calmness and quiet come—a period he was only permitted to see from Pisgah's height—the large measure of his wisdom will be acknowledged by all men."

Since that time twenty years have passed; passion has gone, quiet has come, and all men now speak his praise.

I believe that in all the annals of our race, Abraham Lincoln is the finest example of an unknown man rising from obscurity and ascending to the loftiest heights of human grandeur. The conspicuous causes which produced this grand result were inborn strength, integrity of character, patriotic devotion, and the nurturing influences of a free country. At an early age he began to show the superior endowments which made him a leader of men. In the rough scenes of backwoods life his companions made him umpire in their sports and called him "Honest Abe." At the age of twenty-three his comrades in the Black Hawk War made him captain. One of these comrades now lives in Louisville—the venerable lawyer, Isaac R. Greene.

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He loves to tell how Captain Lincoln was a leader among the soldiers in that campaign, and attracted all by his good sense, wit, and anecdote.

I knew Mr. Lincoln when he visited Kentucky, twenty years before he came to the Presidency. He then showed he was no ordinary man. I saw him daily; he sat in my office, read my books, and talked with me about his life, his reading, his studies, his aspirations. He made a decided impression upon all. He had an intelligent, vigorous mind, strong in grasp, and original. He was earnest, frank, manly, and sincere in every thought and expression. The artificial was all wanting. He had natural force and natural refinement. His after-life was a continuous development of his youthful promise.

When he came to the Presidency, he was in the full completion of manhood, nurtured in the school of Nature and our broad, free country. He was a grand structure, designed, fashioned, and furnished for a grand purpose. Thenceforth he was to live solely for his country.

The question of the ages had come to the test. Can a nation endure dedicated to the proposition that all men are free and equal? We now look back and see how much depended upon the character of the chief magistrate in that crucial hour. Generals might fail, but the President can not fail. He was to command through a four years' battle.

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He was to be master through a four years' tempest. At every point, at every moment he must prove his full sufficiency. He must be wise, resolute, courageous, firm, patient, loyal, and true. He must impress all others that he comes up to the standard of this great measure.

And so it was; he was equal to the task—he so impressed all those who saw him rightly and truly. Those near him felt continually the mastery of his wisdom, and there were times when his influence was inspiration to all. I saw him in moments when his courage rose to the majesty of grandest heroism, and sent its strength leaping through the veins of his countrymen, nerving them to sustain to the utmost limit the living ramparts of the nation facing the doubtful battlefield. His serene confidence restored the lapsing faith of men. His never-relaxing hope cheered them on to victory. Experience in hardships had given him a brave and hopeful disposition. Experience in professional life had disciplined and steadied his mind. Attentive reading and observation had taught him much. His learning was sufficient to balance his perfect practicality. It was that sufficiency of learning which comes inevitably in this land of ours, bountiful in all things, to such a man as Lincoln was, in the course of twenty-five years' diligent professional life and close attention to public affairs. It was sufficient to enable him to see things in

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their relations, and to act with intelligent discrimination; sufficient to give liberal views, dissipate narrowness, and broaden judgment. He had learned the theory, the objects, the duties, the powers of this great Government. He had learned to know men. His own marvelously balanced humanity weighed men with unerring precision. He knew the real from the feigned. Truth felt assurance in his presence, and falsehood quailed. He had learned how to overcome difficulties, how to maintain composure in peril, how to be firm in doing and not doing, how to move neither too fast nor too slow. He had learned to think wisely. He said: "We must see things as they are; to-day is not yesterday, to-morrow will not be to-day. That which is right must be done." He had learned to express his thoughts in language of unsurpassed energy, aptitude, and beauty. His utterances in moments of intensest interest thrilled all hearts at the time, and will live coeval with the English tongue.

For four years he bore the burden of the nation racked in the convulsions of civil war. In that four years the events of an age were crowded; passion raged, excitement rose without an ebb, the earth shook with the tramp of armies, the skies were lurid with the flames of battle. It was a period of subversion and revolution. Each day witnessed a new scene in the great drama; each hour brought

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a new responsibility. Who can estimate the value of Abraham Lincoln's service to this country in that tremendous struggle? He was strong when weakness would have been a calamity; wise and prudent when rashness would have been ruin; faithful when to swerve would have been destruction.

With all his lofty qualities the gentleness of his nature never abated. His simplicity, sincerity, and integrity remained in all the purity of youth when he was known as "Honest Abe." He had that charity for all men he pleaded for others to show. Quick to see imperfection, he was never exacting. He was patient to try and ready to excuse; his forbearing spirit dealt with men, rejoicing in the good, with no harshness to the erring. He had no censure for the General who failed, but the comfort that came when the real commanders appeared those only can tell who saw his relieved soul speaking in his countenance.

Nor did any feeling of hatred toward those in opposing arms enter his soul. Although his own election was made the occasion of the great revolt; although he was misrepresented, derided, and insulted; although the duty was cast upon him of sending forth the power of the country to the bloody battlefield; although upon him were concentrated cursings and bitterness, he felt no anger, he uttered no revengeful word. In his patience and

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forgiveness he seemed to rise above the level of humanity.

The nation imbibed his magnanimity. The spectacle of so vast a collision, with none brought to punishment, stands alone in history. Only that group of fiends who stilled the pulsations of Lincoln's great heart paid the penalty of crime. A maudlin sentiment has sought to cast blame on the officials who dealt out justice to these. One in particular is my distinguished friend, the then Judge-Advocate General of the Army. Judge Holt performed his duty kindly and considerately. In every particular he was just and fair. This I know. But Judge Holt needs no vindication from me or any one else. I only speak because I know reflections have been made, and because my position enabled me to know the facts, and because I know the perfect purity and uprightness of his conduct.

Mr. Lincoln always trusted that truth and right would prevail. He never knew the feeling of exemption from anxiety. He was a stranger to rest and repose. His form bent under the weight of his great charge. Care furrowed his countenance. But he had confidence in the ultimate triumph of the right. That confidence lighted his pathway from his youth; it inspired him when the passions of his countrymen were aflame to predict that the mystic chords of memory would swell the

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chorus of the Union when touched by the better angels of our nature.

We wish he could have lived to see the fulfillment of this prophetic vision. But the curtain which veiled the new and glorious era of the nation was just lifting when his eyes forever closed. Great as our country then was, we now contrast it with the present. The fiery tempest of war did not overthrow the giant plant of the American Republic. It burnt the poison from its sap, expanded its beneficence, and sent its roots deeper in eternal foundations.

We wish Mr. Lincoln could have seen the North and South come together in a loving embrace to bury every hostile thought and "kiss again with tears." We wish he could have seen the East and West bound together with iron bands, and the growth from thirty to sixty millions. We wish he were living to-day in the midst of his peaceful and happy countrymen. We wish we could now see him reposing in the comfortable retirement of his home, beholding, at a venerable age, the present splendors of our glorious Union. For the Union he felt the most intense love, and for those who went to the battle in her cause his tender solicitude was like that of the fond ones waiting and praying at home. These are his words near the end of the conflict:

"Let us finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have

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borne the battle, and for his widow and orphans; to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

We wish he could have seen the consummation of all his patriotic hopes, as it is our privilege to see it this day. Were it possible for him to be here now in this great assembly of gallant soldiers whose heroism sustained and preserved the Union, he would take you each one affectionately by the hand, and from the depths of his grateful soul say, "God bless you!"

To those who knew and loved James Speed best, it was noticeable during the last few years of his life at his beautiful country home that more and more frequently he walked alone to the end of the garden plot. From this highest point on the farm the eastern and western sky-lines could be plainly seen. Almost every clear evening his figure might be seen in silhouette against the soft dying tints of the sunset. Somehow, during his whole life the pregnant earth and the bending sky with all their beauties had been to him something which stood for

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church, soft music, and the other phases of devout worship. Thus he would stand, hat in hand, watching the light. When he came back to the house there was frequently a soft light in his face, a light which he had caught from the depths of the sunset. Gradually as the months slipped by the warm, soft glories of the sunsets seemed to become a part of his very nature, and his going out June 25, 1887, was as soft as the most glorious sunset he had watched in the passing years.

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